

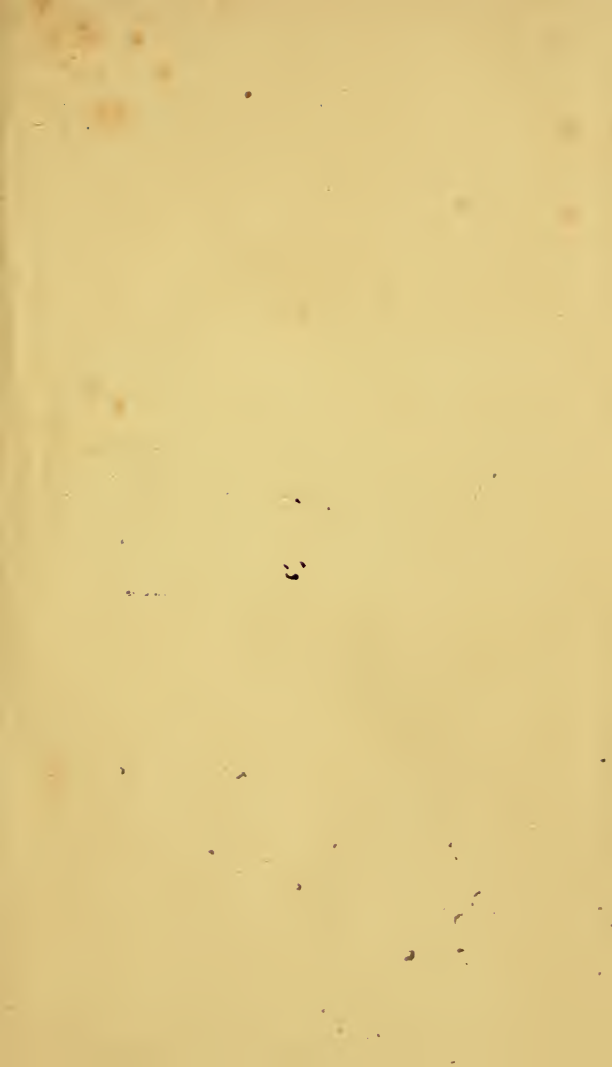
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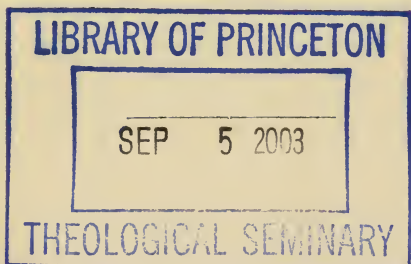
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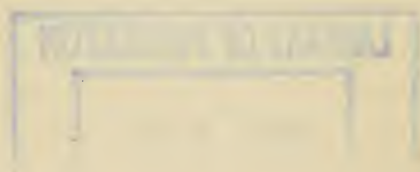
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



A FEW of the following Illustrations have already appeared in a more fugitive form; and, now that they are gathered together, they are submitted to the indulgent perusal of those who find pleasure in the symbolical teaching of Scripture, and to whom Nature herself is more dear since they found a key to her language in the Lively Oracles.

December 22, 1855.



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THE TREE OF LIFE.

WAKING up to conscious existence in the midst of a garden, it would seem as if man had not entirely forgotten the wonderful vision on which his eyes then opened. At least, there is no passion more general than the admiration of beautiful flowers. They kindle the rapture of infancy, and it is touching to see how over the first king-cups or daisies its tiny hand closes more eagerly than hereafter it will grasp silver coins or golden. The solitary blossom lights a lamp of quiet gladness in the poor man's chamber, and in the palace of the prince the marble of Canova and the canvas of Raffaele are dimmed by the lordly exotic with its calyx of flame or its petals of snow. With these companions of our departed innocence we plait the bridal wreath, and, scattered on

the coffin, or planted on the grave, there seems a hope of resurrection in their smile, a sympathy in their gentle decay. And whilst to the dullest gaze they speak a lively oracle, in their empyrean bloom and unearthly fragrance the pensive fancy recognises some mysterious memory, and asks,—

“Have we been all at fault? Are we the sons
Of pilgrim sires who left their lovelier land?
And do we call inhospitable climes
By names they brought from home?”

But in the midst of that primeval Garden the eye was arrested by two objects, of which the counterpart cannot now be found in the field or the forest. One of these was “the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,”—regarding which God said, “Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The other was “the Tree of Life,” which possessed a supernatural virtue. To eat of it was to live for ever. Its fruit was the antidote of death and the means of sustaining man in his original immortality.

The Tree of Knowledge was a test of obe-

dience. Any act of transgression would have forfeited man's tenure of Paradise; but in making a covenant with Adam God was pleased to select one special form of abstinence as the criterion of his self-denial and his loyalty. Around this Tree, so "good for food" and so "pleasant to the eyes," the Supreme Lawgiver reared a fence, and saying, "Thou shalt not eat of it," He concentrated man's attention on a single point, and, so to speak, reduced his trial to a single issue. But the subtilty of Satan and the attractions of the forbidden tree proved too strong for man's loyalty. He took the tempting fruit. He ate, and was undone.

The Tree of Life was a token of the Creator's preserving care and a memento of the creature's dependence. What like it was we do not know, but it possessed a marvellous efficacy. As long as man ate of it he could not die: and it has been ingeniously suggested that the protracted lives of the antediluvians were owing to the power of this Paradisaic antidote lingering for ages in the human constitution. But however this may be, the Tree was a type of the one Great Source of Im-

mortality. It taught the creature that he was not his own preserver. It reminded him that the "Fountain of Life" was external to himself, and that the only security for his own life's prolongation was the constant command of this soul-gladdening and life-confirming sustenance. And most likely every time that he partook of it he was conscious of an intenser immortality. Possibly the consummation of each day's lightsome labour, and coincident with those visits of his Heavenly Father which made so welcome the cool of the day, we can imagine him resorting to the spot where stood the sacramental symbol,—its very continuance a sign that on either side the covenant continued still inviolate,—devoutly stretching forth his hand to the laden bough, and whilst he and his partner ate the mystic fruit, which filled all their being with celestial joy and raised them nearer to the angels, overhearing from above the voice of God, answering with their evening hymn, and then sinking into hallowed slumber beneath the sacred shadow.

After man's transgression, the Tree of Life ceased to be accessible. Lest, in his desper-

tion, man should rush to it, and by its mis-timed use entail on himself immortal misery, God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, and with a flaming sword and cherub-sentinels guarded every avenue. And now the gates of the primeval Paradise are closed. That short dispensation is ended. That covenant is broken beyond all possibility of reparation; and in this world there is no longer any innocent creature to whom God can say what he said to Adam, "Do this and live."

But there is still a Tree of Life. Instead of abandoning our guilty race to self-entailed destruction, in His unspeakable mercy, God has interposed, and in the mission and atonement of His own dear Son has provided a salvation for sinners of mankind. And throughout the inspired records, the Saviour and His work are repeatedly introduced under the veil of this most ancient emblem.

In Ezekiel's vision of the Temple Waters we are told, that on the bank of the river "shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: every month they shall bring forth fruit

afresh : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine :” a passage predicting that great outburst of Gospel blessings with which the Church of Christ is yet to surprise herself and renovate the world, and which connects itself so obviously with John’s vision of the New Jerusalem : “ And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve fruits, and yielded its fruit every month : and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations :” or, as it has been rendered in the pleasant rhyme of that forgotten bard who long since sang “ Jerusalem, my happy home :” —

“ Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
 Continually are green ;
 There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers
 As nowhere else are seen.

Quite through the streets, with silver sound,
 The flood of life doth flow ;
 Upon whose banks on every side
 The trees of life do grow.

These trees each month do yield their fruit,
For evermore they spring ;
And all the nations of the world
To thee their honours bring."

So profuse is the immortality, and so universally accessible are the blessings of this happy region, that either prophet speaks in these passages as if the trees of life were many : just as elsewhere, with allusion to His manifold operations and offices, the one great Comforter is called "the Seven Spirits of God." Elsewhere, however, where precision and personality are required, the primitive unity reappears ; and in the promise to the faithful of Ephesus we read, "To him that overcometh will I grant to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,"—repeated and extended in the last page of the canon, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

In our present contemplation of this celestial Tree we shall restrict ourselves to its health-restoring and life-sustaining efficacy.

The pre-requisite to all enjoyment is health.

You are sick, and your little sister brings in a snowdrop from the garden, or a sprig of verbena from the conservatory, and you take it with a languid smile, and lay it beside your pillow, and hardly look at it again. And your brother comes in and shows you a splendid present which has just been sent you, or he opens a letter and announces that the lawsuit is gained, and that you are heir to a noble property: but the pain just then is exquisite, and in this intensity of torture there is nothing you desire but deliverance from anguish. Or in the adjoining chamber a charming melody is played; but you beg them to leave off, for the noise is driving you distracted.

And so, spiritually, there is no health in us; but the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. Desire has failed. The soul of man takes no interest in the objects which once stirred it with liveliest emotion; but whether it be in the dull discomfort of habitual ungodliness, or in the acuter paroxysms of sinful passion and guilty remorse, those objects which fill a holy universe with delight are the objects of the sinner's aversion or contempt. And were you saying to him, "Here

is a pearl of great price which your Elder Brother has sent you from the far country: this is a letter announcing that our Advocate has gained the case, and secured for the members of this family the fair inheritance of Heaven," he would only listen with languid curiosity; and were you inviting him to take part in any of those holy recreations which form the pastime of spirits pure and healthy: "Listen to this description of God's love. Let us sing together this psalm of thanksgiving," the invitation would only vex him.

But Christ is the cure of sin. His atonement pacifies the conscience; His Spirit purifies the heart; His person,—the life He led, and the words He spake,—give new and endearing views of God. And just as in the days of His earthly sojourn, to go to Him was to be cured of what disease soever any man had, so now that He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, it is to bestow repentance and remission of sins; and if you go to Him, whatever be your nature's malady, He will make you whole. If covered with sin's leprosy, and ashamed to carry into a Presence so pure defilement so repulsive, moved with

compassion He will say, "I will: be thou clean," and that word of kind omnipotence will make you a new creature. If prostrate in sin's fever,—if tossed with passion, and delirious with wild desire,—He will take you by the hand and raise you up, and, restored and tranquillised, you will be able to minister to the Master. If sick of the palsy,—if bereft of spiritual power, and shut up in the shaking sepulchre of a dreary and disconsolate existence, trembling for the future, but unable to improve the present,—He will say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," and like him, who, strong in the infusion of a celestial happiness, "took up his bed" and departed to his house, the Saviour's pardoning word will fill you with immortal youth, and send you on your way rejoicing.

Alexander the Great was dying of a wound which did not seem very dangerous at first, but it baffled his physicians, and was rapidly becoming mortal. One night, however, he dreamed that some one had brought him a peculiar-looking plant, which, when applied to the festering sore, had cleansed and closed it. In the morning when he awoke,

he described the plant, and the historian says, that being sought for, it was found and applied, and the fiery wound was healed. Now, dear reader, your soul has got a deadly hurt. It has been bitten by that old serpent, the devil ; and although the injury may not look alarming at the first, sin has got into the system, and left to yourself you will never recover. The wound gets worse. Your very efforts to heal it, only exasperate it more and more. You have broken the Sabbath ; you have taken God's name in vain ; you have been overtaken with strong drink ; you have been guilty of some deed, harsh, cruel, dishonest ; or you have spoken some word malignant, impious, or untrue :—something has occurred which stounding through your conscience, calls attention to the neglected stab in your nature. And you try to heal it. You lay some flattering unction on the sore. You promise to yourself and to God that you will never do the like again. You form earnest purposes, and you sketch out excellent schemes of daily conduct. You bind yourself to a daily task of Bible-reading ; you go regularly to church ; perhaps in the hope of

a decisive benefit, you even force yourself forward to the communion. But nothing comes of it. The damage is too deep. Ungodliness,—the virus that kills the soul,—has got into the blood; it bounds in every rebellious pulse, it breathes in every selfish prayer, it converts into a worse disease each self-righteous palliative; and though for a season your conscience may be soothed, the wound is still deadly, your nature is still unrenewed.

But despised and rejected of men, there is a tender plant known to God, and revealed in the Gospel, which is able to heal you. It is the Balm of Gilead,—the finished work of Immanuel, the substitution in the sinner's stead, and the satisfaction rendered to Divine justice by God's beloved Son. In order to obtain its healing essence, they used to wound the Balsam Tree; and so for our transgressions the Saviour was wounded. In order to give forth in one crowning and conclusive act the merit of His life, He was obedient unto death, and He made His soul an offering for sin. In the fires of Gethsemane "the green tree" burned, and was not consumed;

but in that hour of hot indignation, when His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground, the first drops of this heavenly balm exuded, and when on Calvary His blessed side was pierced, the full current followed. The blood then poured forth, meeting as it did the great maxim in Heaven's jurisprudence, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and bringing to a climax the vicarious sufferings of the Divine Redeemer, is often spoken of as if it had been the entire price which purchased redemption, and is constantly employed as an affecting synonyme for Immanuel's atoning sacrifice. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." "Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

With its peace-speaking, soul-cleansing efficacy, this precious blood is the balm which God has provided to restore soundness to the sin-stricken nature. Most usually in the vehicle of some "faithful saying," the Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning Jesus and

applies it to the understanding and the heart. In some thoughtful or anxious moment He sheds a new and endearing light on the sacrifice and intercession of the Saviour ; and, whilst surveying the great appointed Antidote, love, thankfulness, and praise, steal into the mind of the beholder. The aspect of the Godhead is altered ; and, surrendering to the grace of the Gospel, the rebel is subdued into a penitent, and the penitent is surprised into the gratitude and new obedience of the prodigal restored.

As a North-American Indian once described it to an audience in London : “ You know we Indians are great deer-hunters, and when we shoot the deer he runs away as if he was not hurt ; but when he gets to the hill, he feels the pain, and he lays down on that side where the pain is most severe. Then he feels the pain on the other side, and turns over ; and so he wanders about till he perishes. After I learned to pray, that pain in my heart increased more severe. I could not sleep. Like the wounded deer I turned from side to side, and could not rest. At last I got up at one or two o'clock at night, and walked about

my room. I made another effort in prayer, and said, 'O Jesus, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;' and before the break of day, I found that my heavy heart was taken away. I felt happy. I felt the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. I found Jesus indeed sweet to my soul."

A hundred years ago, there was a vigorous-minded man and an able scholar, the rector of Wintringham in Lincolnshire. Entering the ministry without love to God or to the souls of men, for years he spent his professional income on self-indulgence; and whilst the pastor amused himself, the people perished. At last his conscience was awakened, and as his conduct grew correct, his preaching became earnest and arousing. Still he was ignorant of "Christ crucified," and as his was not the ministry of reconciliation no effect followed his solemn exhortations. He was vexed at the epistle to the Romans: for, hard as he found it to attain a life of superior sanctity, St. Paul seemed to make no account of human goodness however eminent; and although he read Grotius and Hammond, they did not resolve his difficulties.

But being a man of strong native sense, he could not rest in this uncertainty. Accordingly, one day he “spread the matter before the Lord,” and entreated Him to pity his distress, and guide him by His Holy Spirit into the understanding of the truth. Then taking up his Greek Testament, he read carefully over the first six chapters of the Romans. To his unspeakable astonishment his difficulties disappeared. The righteousness of God was revealed to him. He saw that justification through Jesus Christ alone is the great burden of the Gospel, the grand display of God’s perfections, and the only principle of genuine holiness. He rejoiced with exceeding joy. “His conscience was purged from guilt through the atoning blood of Christ, and his heart set at liberty to run the way of God’s commandments, in a spirit of filial love and holy delight; and from that hour Mr. Adam began to preach salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, to man by nature and practice lost, condemned under the law, and, as his own expression is, ‘Always a sinner.’”

But if the balsam of this immortal Tree is renovation to the soul, there is in its very

leaves a sanatory virtue. They are "medicine." They are "for the healing of the nations." The sayings of Jesus, and the silent charm of his recorded actions, are an influence doing good in the world every day; and no one can come beneath the Tree of Life but straightway his mind is better. Is he carking and care-worn, afraid lest his supplies be cut off, and he be left without a competency? Then at his feet he gathers a leaf inscribed, "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and take no thought for the morrow." Is he lonely? mourning friends estranged or buried? Then amidst a musical whisper overhead there falls flickering into his bosom a leaf which says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Is he vexed and angry? fuming at some offence, vowing vengeance for some indignity? Then, like a rose-petal, soft and fragrant, there glides down some memorial of

Calvary, or the fifth petition in a well-remembered prayer ; and as it lies upon his heart so calm, his angry spirit cools, and he gets grace to cry, " Father, forgive." For Christ's name sake Mr. Simeon was at one time an object of much scorn and contempt in the University of Cambridge ; and it was very trying to be a man so marked, that no one would like to be recognised by him or seen walking with him. One day as he strolled along, weary with continual reproach and buffeting, he prayed that God would send him some cordial in His Word ; and opening his little Testament, the first sentence on which his eye alighted was, " They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name ; him they compelled to bear his cross." Relating the incident, he added, " You know Simon is the same name as Simeon ; and when I read *that*, I said, Lord, lay it on me, lay it on me ! I will gladly bear the cross for Thy sake. And I thenceforth bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow." That was a leaf from the Tree ; and as in the instance of that opportune text, it has often happened that the mourner in Zion has come

into the sanctuary with some matter too hard for him, or with some thorn in the flesh or some wound in his spirit he has sate down to read or to meditate, and, like the leaf brought into the anxious ark by Noah's dove, some faithful saying brought home by the Comforter, has turned fear into hope, and languor into life, and sent him on his way rejoicing.

Nor is it only to the individual believer that these leaves bring healing. At this moment numbers of them are blown about the world; and although drifted to and fro, soiled, withered, and far distant from the Tree, even in their promiscuous flight they have helped to heal the nations. They banished the gladiatorial games of old Rome, and cured the abominations of classic Paganism. In modern Europe they have extinguished slavery, and around person and property they have thrown a sanction and securities formerly unknown. Even now they mitigate the enormities of war, and with the Sabbath and many softening influences coming in betwixt Mammon and the toiling million, they win an occasional respite for the bleared eyes and blistered hands of Industry. And even

when crushed beneath the careless foot, or dragged in the way-side mire, they still emit their heavenly fragrance; and although they may be only quoted to adorn an idle speech or tale, no tongue can tell how much the Saviour's holy words are doing to soften the heart of Humanity and purify the air of Time.

But if the leaf of this Tree is for medicine, its fruit is for food to the nations of the saved. The person of Immanuel is the great storehouse of the Church's strength and happiness; and it is by apprehending His character and availing ourselves of His kindness that we are to grow in hope towards God and in personal holiness. For although the Tree of Life is now transplanted to the midst of the Upper Paradise, his branches stretch to "this lower ground:" the blessings which He purchased are brought nigh, even to the hand and mouth of sinners here on earth. And as the fruits of this Tree are yielded in twelve-fold succession, there need not be a month in any year, nor a day in any week, in which the soul does not enjoy the tranquillising, invigorating, and sanctifying results of communion with the Saviour.

In Eastern poetry they tell of a wondrous tree, on which grew golden apples and silver bells; and every time the breeze went by and tossed the fragrant branches, a shower of these golden apples fell, and the living bells, they chimed and tinkled forth their airy ravishment. On the Gospel Tree there grow melodious blossoms; sweeter bells than those which mingled with the pomegranates on Aaron's vest; holy feelings, heaven-taught joys; and when the wind blowing where he listeth, the south-wind waking,—when the Holy Spirit breathes upon that soul, there is the shaking down of mellow fruits, and the flow of healthy odours all around, and the gush of sweetest music, whose gentle tones and joyful echoings are wafted through all recesses of the soul. Not easily explained to others, and too ethereal to define, these joys are on that account but the more delightful. The sweet sense of forgiveness; the conscious exercise of all the devout affections, and grateful and adoring emotions Godward; the lull of sinful passions, itself ecstatic music; an exulting sense of the security of the well-ordered covenant; the gladness of surety-

righteousness, and the kind Spirit of adoption encouraging you to say, "Abba, Father;" all the delightful feelings which the Spirit of God increases or creates, and which are summed up in that comprehensive word,—“joy in the Holy Ghost.”

Such was the happy case of Dr. Doddridge when he wrote as follows to an absent friend: “My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful. I have more of the presence of God than I ever remember. He enables me to live for Him, and to live with Him. When I awake in the morning I address myself to Him, and converse with Him; and He meets me in my study, in secret and family devotion. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home, pleasant to visit the sick, the poor; pleasant to write letters of necessary business by which any good can be done, and pleasant to preach the Gospel to poor souls; pleasant in the week to think how near another Sabbath is, and oh! how much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and that it is but a step from Earth to Heaven.”

Were such a state of mind continuous, the beatified existence would become a Heaven on Earth; and the only reason why it is not continuous is, that we wander away from the Tree of Life; we forget what Jesus is, or cease to avail ourselves of His intercession. Accepted in the Beloved, and, whatsoever we do, doing it in the name of Christ Jesus, "our days would begin, pass, and end in pleasure."

"My Beloved," says the Church, "is as the apple-tree. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Intimacy with the Saviour is happiness, and from that adoring and affectionate communion there should be seen to arise a decisive effect on the temper and conduct.

1. For instance, confidence in God. No man hath seen God, but the only-begotten Son had a most intimate knowledge of the perfections of the Most High; and that knowledge filled Him with ineffable complacency. It was His happiness to know that the throne of the universe is occupied by spotless rectitude, boundless benevolence, and infallible

wisdom ; and in holding communion with God, He held communion with the holiest of happy beings, and the happiest of the holy, and this infinitely holy and happy being His own Father in heaven. Jesus Christ had perfect confidence in God. In all His doings He rejoiced, and in all His requirements He cheerfully acquiesced, evermore saying, "Father, I thank Thee : Father, Thy will be done ;" and undisturbed by one opposing wish, undeflected by one antagonist interest, the mind that was in Christ, and the mind that is in God, were in constant unison. The will of God and the life of Jesus made one music :—the Pattern-Man and the manifested Jehovah, and so a perfect Mediation :—Heaven enshrined in Humanity, and Humanity enfolded in the bosom of infinite Love.

And whosoever will in meekness sit at Christ's feet will soon learn right views of God's character. The representation of God's disposition, so forgiving, so compassionate, so fatherly, which He so often gave in His parables and discourses ; which was illustrated in His own beneficent career, and at last crowned by His peerless sacrifice ;—when a thoughtful

eye has fixed upon it and a candid spirit owned its truth, it works a marvellous transformation. Strange prejudices vanish,—prejudices old as memory and deep as sin; and in the society of One whom God hails as His beloved Son, and whom the sinner learns to recognise as his own Divine and adorable Brother, views of the unseen Jehovah break in upon the mind akin to those which inspired and irradiated the Saviour Himself: until in the Maker of worlds the spirit finds its truest Father, its kindest and most intimate Friend: until that great and inevitable Being whom the guilty conscience eyed askance as the frowning Spectator of all its actions, and the incubus on all its merriment, becomes the brightness of the present and the hope of the future, the strength of the heart and its portion for ever.

2. An endeared command. To a worldly man the commands of God are briars and thorns. They wound him in his attempt to reach his sinful pleasures, and perhaps he flies into a rage, and kicks against the pricks,—piercing himself through with many sorrows. But just as the naturalist tells us that spines

are abortive buds, and that if they had been allowed to develope fully, they might have adorned the tree with fragrant blossoms and fair fruits,—so the precepts, which on the dry trunk of Pharisaism stand out as mere prickly prohibitions, expand on the Tree of Life and become equivalent to great and precious promises. Requirements so exceeding broad as the love of God with all the soul,—so very deep as holiness of heart and purity of thought,—so strangely high as good-will to enemies and the repayment of cruelty with kindness;—commands, which to the man trying to earn his own heaven, are only an interruption and a provocation; to the believer in Jesus are “the mark of a high calling,”—the index of the rank to which he himself is yet to rise,—the pledge of eventual perfect holiness. As found on the Tree of Life the thorn has developed into a pleasant fruit, and fraught with his Saviour’s love and fragrant with good things to come, the disciple finds it sweet to his taste.

3. Self-denial. Said our Lord, “If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and deny himself, and follow me.” The

fruit of the Tree of Life is tonic and invigorating, and nowhere is self-denial so easy as in the society of the meek and lowly Redeemer. But what is self-denial? Is it sackcloth on the loins? Is it a wooden block for a pillow? Is it pulse or lentil-pottage for the daily meal? Is it a crypt or kennel for one's lodging? Ah no! In all this flesh-pinching there is often a subtile self-pleasing: but when the temper is up to rule the spirit, and over a "manly revenge" to let Christian magnanimity triumph,—that is self-denial. To take pains with dull children, and with ignorant and insipid adults,—that is self-denial. To hide from the left hand what the right is doing: to ply the task when fellow-labourers drop away and lookers-on wax few: for the Lord's sake still to follow up the work when the world gives you no credit,—that is self-denial. When you might tell your own exploits, to let another praise you, and not your own lips; and when a fancy-touch would make a good story a great deal better, to let the "yea" continue simple yea,—that is self-denial. Rather than romantic novel-ties to prefer duty with its sober common-

place routine, and to stand at your post when the knees are feeble and the heart is faint,—that is self-denial. From personal indulgence, —from the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, to save wherewithal to succour the indigent and help forward Christ's kingdom on earth,—that is self-denial.

“ O could we learn that sacrifice,
 What lights would all around us rise!
 How would our hearts with wisdom talk
 Along life's dullest, dreariest walk !

We need not bid for cloister'd cell
 Our neighbour and our work farewell,
 Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
 For sinful man beneath the sky.

The trivial round, the common task,
 Would furnish all we ought to ask ;
 Room to deny ourselves ; a road
 To bring us daily nearer God.”

4. Wandering on the strand, it sometimes happens that the castaway picks up a golden apple or some bright fruit which reminds him of his own sunny clime, and makes him wish that he were there once more. And so when there is winter in his world,—when joy has

fled away and nights are growing dark, the Christian pilgrim sometimes finds at his feet an unexpected memento of his heavenly home. It has descended from the Tree of Life, and brought down to Patmos the very air of Paradise ; and as he presses to his lips the great and precious promise, he can only cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus ; come quickly." He is an exile from Eden, and as there is now little to detain him here, he longs "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "Do you feel reconciled?" asked a friend of the dying Payson. "Oh ! that is too cold," he exclaimed. "I rejoice, I triumph. And this happiness will endure as long as God Himself, for it consists in admiring and adoring Him." Or as a few days before he wrote to his sister, "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death,

which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, and now he fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."

A frame of mind like this is the vestibule of heaven; and as it is in acquaintance with Christ that such blessedness began, so it is in closer communion with the Saviour that this blessedness expands and becomes the joy of a glorified existence. "To him that overcometh will I grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The Tree of Life is transplanted, and the old Eden is extinct; but for His ransomed God has provided some better thing than that ancient Paradise. In the fair climes of that celestial country there is reproduced in a mere exalted rendering all that was bright

and beautiful in Adam's native garden, with this unspeakable enhancement that probation and peril are for ever past and all is now fruition. There is no more curse, and the tears with which our first parents quitted their aboriginal bowers and which since then have been so often shed in quitting a loved home or familiar haunts, will be wiped away on entering a scene whence the inhabitant knows that he will go no more out. The presence of God is no longer limited to the cool of the day, but is itself the day-spring of the glad eternity,—the palpable pervasion and immortal sunshine of the holy place; and “there is no night there.” Nor can sin ever enter. No serpent can scale the brilliant battlements, or cross the crystal river, or glide through the green pastures of that blood-bought Paradise; and the flaming sword which let the ransomed sinner pass, only shuts out the tempter and the fear of evil. Knowing as they are known, overwhelmed with the beatific vision and all those disclosures which it will require eternity to study and comprehend, there will be no inducement to snatch forbidden fruit or intrude into hid-

den mysteries ; and now that the cherub-sentinel has changed his station, and now that the Tree of Life grows on either side the river, now that there is no barrier of flesh and blood to interrupt communion with the Saviour, and no sin to hinder access,—the denizen of that free and forgiven country may spend a celestial noon beneath the balmy shadow, and for holier services and yet higher praise may quaff from the clustered boughs fresh draughts of immortal vigour.

THE VINE.

“UNITY in diversity” is a principle by which the entire creation is pervaded; and, as the Former of the universe is the Father of our spirits, He has adapted the one to the other: and whilst the variety is a source of immediate and universal enjoyment, the oneness which underlies that variety is to the more thoughtful minds at once the germ of poetry and the root of natural religion.

However distinct, and at first sight dissimilar, the objects may appear, a closer inspection always reveals a latent identity. They are the filling-up of one great plan; they bear the stamp of the self-same Intelligence. And this ultimate identity running through the multiform creation forces on our minds the conviction that the Creator is one,

whilst it reveals His varied benevolence and His boundless resources. As in the experiment where the philosopher sowed seeds which grew up green letters,* the materials with which the Eternal writes His name may vary; but the style of the hand-writing is evermore the same. And whether in illuminated characters He paints it on the field, or in starry alphabet bids it flame from the face of the firmament; whether He works it in the curious mosaic of a shell, or in Hebrew letters inscribes it on tables of stone, Devotion recognises its Heavenly Father's Hand and adores the matchless autograph.

The same principle in the creation, with the corresponding propensity in our own minds, accounts for the force which all feel in analogical reasoning, and the delight which most persons derive from metaphorical language.

Deep in our nature there exists a tendency to seek amongst all interesting objects points of resemblance; and when some intuition keener than our own reveals that resemblance, we bow to its truth or acclaim to its beauty. For instance, when human life is compared to

* Dr. Beattie.

the course of a river,—cradled in the moss-fringed fountain, tripping gaily through its free and babbling infancy, swelling into proud and impetuous youth, burdened with the great ships in its sober and utilitarian manhood, and then merging in the ocean of eternity,—who is there that does not see the resemblance, and in seeing it find his mind richer by at least one bright thought? There may be little resemblance betwixt a clouded sky and the human countenance; and yet, when that sky opens and lets through the sunshine, we say that it is smiling, and when that dull countenance opens and lets out the soul we say that it is shining; and in the metaphor we feel that we have given a new animation to the sun, a new glory to “the human face divine.”

This tendency to metaphor, and the universal delight in parables, comparisons, and figures of speech, are no mere freaks of man’s fancy. They have their foundation in the mind and method of Deity, whose thoughts are all in harmony, and whose works and ways are all connected with one another, so that what we call the imagination of the poet, if

his reading be correct, is really the logic of Omniscience. And without expatiating farther on the subject at present, we may here recall the fact that already the universe contains one masterpiece of Infinite Wisdom, in whom all the diversities coexist and make up one matchless unity. In Christ, at once very God and very man, the Father of Eternity, and yet for a season the tenant of the tomb ; in Christ, with His glorified materialism and præ-material divinity, our Brother, and yet the Son of the Highest, the Root and yet the Offspring of David, we have the substance of all shadows, the conciliation of all opposites, the acme of every excellence, the pinnacle of every perfection, the glorious and ultimate Unity in whom centre and coexist the whole of Creation's boundless diversities. Like creatures flying through the night, we touch what feels at first a separate leaf or a solitary plant, but it proves to be the outmost twig of a great tree. Traced down a little way, the little twig joins another, and both together spring from a branch, which followed out is found with its twin branch to issue from a goodly bough, till at last all branchings and bifurcations

conduct you back to the ultimate unity in the common trunk and central stem. So, every object in Nature, and every incident in Providence, however isolated it may appear for a moment, is found to have relations which link it to some other, and these again have a connexion which leads back to something deeper and still more intimate; till at last in the Alpha and Omega, the tree of Life Himself, you reach the source of all variety and the centre of each divergence, the counterpart to every Hebrew type and the key to Nature's mighty emblem.

If these views are correct,—if the Person of Immanuel is that adorable Unity which within itself includes and harmonises all diversities of goodness and beauty, we see that there is a foundation in the nature of things for the typical instruction so abundant in Scripture, and we perceive with what significance it was that Jesus said of Himself, “I am THE TRUE VINE.” In applying the types or expounding the symbols of Holy Writ, we may fall into errors of detail, but we are still secure in the general principle. And if we study them rightly, they will confer a double benefit.

Like Jacob, when his pillow of rock became the first step in a staircase which ascended to God and the angels, they will make the stones of the field the starting-point of holy meditations, and will fill the landscapes of earth with light from Heaven.

Were you going early in the year to the banks of the Rhine, you would see the people on every slope busied about some important plant. To your nearer view it looks little better than a wooden peg, a dead and sapless pin. But return in September, and you will find that the wintry peg has shot into a pillar of verdure, and from purple bunches is pouring fatness and fragrance on the soil. The shout of the vintage and the brimming vat explain the labours of the spring.

On the hills of Palestine the Heavenly Husbandman planted a goodly vine. But at first it had no form nor comeliness, and promised little. It was a root out of a dry ground, and few expected that it would come to anything. And when its heavenly origin was hinted, in a rage the men of Nazareth cast it over their vineyard-wall, and soon

afterwards the men of Jerusalem took the tender Plant, and having bruised and trampled it under their indignant feet, they hoped that they had destroyed it for ever. But the Heavenly Husbandman did not lose sight of it. He planted it again. This time, however, He concealed it from view. He so contrived, that though the branches were seen, the vine-stock should no longer be visible. Grafts might be joined to it and fruit might be gathered, but the stem itself was hidden.

A few weeks passed on, and a warm rain fell. A sweet and springy odour filled the air. It was the budding of the invisible Vine. It was the tender grape appearing. There were thousands of blossoms; and from year to year thereafter there was many a glorious vintage. And though rude days have followed; though the passengers have plucked it, and the persecutor has often torn the branches and burnt them in the fire, the Lord of Hosts will ere long return and visit this His Vine. He will cast out the heathen and plant it. He will prepare room before it, and cause it to take deep root, and fill the earth. The hills of the Millennium will be

covered with its shade, and the boughs thereof will be like the goodly cedars.

This earth was the land of the curse—it was the world of sin, death, and sorrow,—when God sent His Son. He freighted the Mediator's person with life, righteousness, peace of conscience, and every mercy that a sinner needs. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so did He give to the Son to have life in Himself," and thus furnished with an abundance of life, He sent the Only-Begotten into the world. But the world hated Him. It saw nothing attractive in Him. It rejected the Saviour. It slew Him. But God raised Him again, and withdrew Him out of mortal sight. Though now hidden from our view, He remains what He was during the days of His visible Incarnation. He is still the Saviour. He is still the sole repository of heavenly blessings for our guilty and necessitous race. Though invisible, He is the great Vine-stock in which all merit and spiritual vitality reside. It is from His fulness that salvation is derived, and only from the grace that is in Him that we can get anything gracious. Though Himself unseen, His members are visible. Be-

lievers are the branches of this wondrous Vine. At Pentecost they were freshest and fairest. They are, perhaps, equally numerous, but more sparse and straggling now. But to see the goodly Vine in its glory, we must wait till the present winter is past, and the summer of the earth is come ; till for pardon and peace willing millions resort to Immanuel, and the rejected Root has become the Plant of Renown.

Those whom Christ originally addressed were fond of parables, and there was no instruction which they more enjoyed than that which was conveyed in emblems and figures. But perhaps your mind has no turn for metaphor. You are rather confused than assisted by it. You have difficulty in following an allegory where people are compared to the branches of a Vine ; and when Christ speaks of a man being a branch "in Himself," and of "abiding in Himself,"* you do not clearly apprehend it. But with a little consideration you will easily make out the main idea. Christ compares Himself to a Vine, and when you remember what a glad and lifesome tree it is,— the tree through which vegetative

* See John, xv. 1-10.

vigour pours the fastest and most freely, and the tree with which the most refreshful and exulting associations were connected; and when you farther recollect that it was to bring abundance of life and felicity that Jesus came into the world, you can see how naturally in this "Tree of Life" Jesus found the emblem of Himself. But this detached and independent vine-sapling which I hold in my hand,—how is it to be made partaker of the life and fatness of the living vine? By creating the closest connexion possible. You engraft it. You take this leafless rod, and you insert it in the quick vine-stock, and speedily the graft has taken. Fibre by fibre, and vein by vein the sapling clings and coheres, till the life of the tree is the life of this adopted branch, and the graft buds and blossoms and matures its clusters from the flowing juices of the vine. And Jesus "has life in Himself." He is now a man of joys. He knows that the Father loves Him, and having completed the work given Him to do, He rests again in the Father's bosom, secure in the Father's complacency, and most blessed for evermore. But here is a dead and sapless soul, here is a

spirit to which holy joy is a stranger, and to which God is still unknown as a reconciled God and a loving Father. How is this dead and dreary soul to be made partaker of Christ's life and joy? By creating the closest possible connexion. That sapless twig lives when united to the Vine. That sinner lives when united to the Saviour. But what is the closest possible connexion between the sinner and the Saviour? It is such a connexion as joins soul to soul. It is such a connexion as joins the feeble and finite soul of the sinner to the holy and Divine soul of the Saviour. It is such a union as confidence and love, congeniality and dependence, create. It is *confidence*,—for Jesus died that He might bring us unto God, and when a soul is persuaded that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost and resigns itself entirely to Him as a sufficient Saviour,—the soul which thus clings to Christ for salvation is by God regarded as one with Christ. A soul which trusts in the Surety will never come into condemnation, for the Surety would thereby be condemned; and a soul which cleaves to the Lord Jesus for pardon is justified already, for it is now

part of that Substitute who was justified long ago. And this union is *love*. You speak of souls that are knit together when they are affectionately attached to one another; and Christ and the Christian are joined by an intense, mutually-pervading, and death-surviving love. Accordingly, He Himself calls this union a "continuance in His love." And it is *congeniality*. When tastes are identical, when persons love the same things and hate the same things, when desires move in concert, when the one treasures up the other's words and tries to anticipate the other's wishes, you say that hearts in such harmony are one spirit. And it is one spirit which fills Christ and the Christian—Christ's "words abide in him" (ver. 7). There is many an endeared saying of his Lord hidden in his fondest memory. And these sayings of Christ do not merely alight on him like rain on the vineyard, but live and abide in him like vital sap in the Vine. And these loved sayings and abiding words come out in new obedience (ver. 10), "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." And it is *dependence*. Where parties are united in any way to one

another, one of whom is greatly superior in strength, or wisdom, or skill, it becomes natural and inevitable, for the inferior to depend on the strength, or wisdom, or skill of that other. Now the believer finds himself so weak, and ignorant, and sinful, that he is compelled to look to his Lord, in whom all these resources abound. Without Christ he can do nothing. But he has learned to lean on Him, who of God is made to him wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Without Christ he cannot pacify an offended God; without Christ he cannot escape the curse of a broken law; without Christ he can do nothing to deliver himself from hell, nor secure his persevering progress to heaven; without Christ he cannot subdue a single sin nor overcome a single temptation. He discovers that it needs an Almighty power to sanctify. "It needs the same power to enlighten his understanding as gave sight to blind Bartimeus; it needs the same power to quiet his conscience as said to the tempest, Peace, be still; it needs the same power to soften his hard and stony heart as melted rivers from the rock; the same power to con-

vert his carnal affections into spiritual as changed the water into wine; the same to subdue his rebellious passions as expelled the devils from the man possessed; and the same power to make him pure of heart and fit for glory as made the leper clean.* And for all holy obedience, he verifies the saying of Jesus, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Wherever a soul believes in Jesus, loves Him, is made one spirit with Him, and depends on Him for wisdom, strength, and righteousness, that soul is united to Jesus. That soul is *in* the Saviour, even as the branch is in the Vine; that soul is dear to God. It is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes an object of the Father's solicitude and care. And it will experience the benefits of this union. It will be fruitful; it will be purified; it will be powerful in prayer; for if union to Jesus be salvation,—productiveness, sanctification, and prevalency in prayer, are effects of this union which He Himself has specified.†

* Clarkson's Sermons, folio, p. 482.

† John, xv. 5, 2, 7.

1. The living branch is fruitful. The chemist who can analyse the fruit of the vine finds many ingredients there. Of these no single one, nor any two together, would form the juice of the grape; but the combination of all yields the polished and delicious berry, which every one knows so well. In different climates, and even in different seasons, the proportion and blending of these constituents may vary, but that is not a good cluster where any is wanting. The fruit of the true Vine has also been analysed, and in the best specimens the nine following ingredients are found (Gal. v. 22):—

LOVE,	GENTLENESS,
JOY,	GOODNESS,
PEACE,	FAITH,
LONG-SUFFERING,	MEEKNESS,
TEMPERANCE.	

In poor samples there is a deficiency of one or other of these elements. A dry and diminutive sort is lacking in peace and joy. A tart kind, which sets the teeth on edge, owes its austerity to its scanty infusion of gentleness, goodness, and meekness. There is a watery, deliquescent sort, which for the want

of long-suffering is not easily preserved ; and there is a flat variety, which having no body of faith or temperance, answers few useful purposes. Love is the essential principle which is in no case entirely absent ; and by the glistening fulness and rich aroma which its plentiful presence creates, you can recognise the freshest and most generous clusters ; whilst the predominance of some other element gives to each its distinguishing flavour, and marks the growth of Eshcol, Sibmah, or Lebanon.

(1.) Wherever there is union to Christ there is *love*. This, as we have said, is the essential principle. Whatever else there be, if there be not love, it profits nothing, it proves nothing. Love to God and our neighbour is the essence of piety. It is the body, the basis, the staple element ; and if the great commandment, and the next greatest be absent, whatever else there be, there is not Christianity. Reader, have you got it ? To Christ's question, " Lovest thou me ? " is it your answer, " Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee ? " Then, if you love Jesus, you will love Him whose express image Jesus is. To God in Christ,

your soul will be attached in gratitude, submission, and complacency. You will not wish Him less holy, less righteous, less true. Awed by His glorious majesty, and melted by His ineffable mercy, all that is dust and ashes in you will be humbled, and all that is devout and filial will be kindled into grateful adoration. If nothingness and sin bid you be silent, the sight of your Great Representative gone back to the bosom of His Father, inspires you with a joyful assurance and a humble confidence Godward; and, boldest where you are most abased, beneath the Cross you learn to cry, Abba, Father. You love Him who first loved you, and "feeling it sweet to be accepted of God on any grounds, to be accepted in his own beloved Son, you feel is sweeter far."*

(2.) And joy. The essence of love is attachment. Joy is the happiness of love. It is love exulting. It is love aware of its own felicity, and rioting in riches which it has no fear of exhausting. It is love taking a view of its treasure, and surrendering itself to bliss without foreboding. "God's promises appear so strong, so solid, so substantial, more

* Nevins' Remains, p. 27.

so than the rocks and everlasting hills; and His perfections, what shall I say of them? When I think of one, I wish to dwell upon it for ever; but another, and another equally glorious, claims a share of admiration; and when I begin to praise, I wish never to cease, but to find it the commencement of that song which will never end. Very often have I felt as if I could that moment throw off the body, without first going to bid them farewell that are at home in my house. Let who will be rich, or admired, or prosperous, it is enough for me that there is such a God as Jehovah, such a Saviour as Jesus, and that they are infinitely and unchangeably glorious and happy!"* And in a similar frame another felt, "Were the universe destroyed, and I the only being in it besides God, He is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded by venomous serpents, and devouring beasts, and savage men, in such a frame I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted joy."†

(3.) Peace. If joy be love exulting, peace

* Payson's Life, chap. 19.

† Memoirs of Rev. S. Pearce.

is love reposing. It is love on the green pastures, it is love beside the still waters. It is that great calm which comes over the conscience, when it sees the atonement sufficient and the Saviour willing. It is unclouded azure in a lake of glass; it is the soul which Christ has pacified, spread out in serenity and simple faith, and the Lord God, merciful and gracious, smiling over it.

(4.) Long-suffering. This is love enduring. If the trial come direct from God, it is enough. It is correction. It is his Heavenly Father's hand, and with Luther the disciple cries, "Strike, Lord, strike. But, oh! do not forsake me." If the trial come from Christian brethren, till it be seven-fold seventy times repeated, love to Jesus demands forgiveness. If it come from worldly men, it is the occasion for that magnanimity which recompenses evil with good. And in every case, it is an opportunity for following a Saviour whom sufferings made perfect. That Saviour never loved the Father more intensely, than when His Father's face was hid, and when the bitter cup proclaimed His justice terrible, and His truth severe. One apostle denied Him, and

all the disciples forsook Him; but Jesus prayed for Peter, whilst Peter was cursing, and His love followed the rest, even when they were running away. Jerusalem killed Him; but in foresight of the guilty deed, it was over Jerusalem that Jesus wept; and when the deed was done, in publishing pardon and the peace of God, it was at Jerusalem that evangelists were directed to begin.

(5.) Gentleness, or affectionateness.* This is love in society. It is love holding intercourse with those around it. It is that cordiality of aspect, and that soul of speech, which assure us that kind and earnest hearts may still be met with here below. It is that quiet influence which, like perfumed flame from an alabaster lamp, fills many a home with light and warmth and fragrance all together. It is the carpet, soft and deep, which, whilst it diffuses a look of ample comfort, deadens many a creaking sound. It is the curtain which from many a beloved form, wards off at once the summer's glow, and the winter's wind. It is the pillow on which sickness lays its head and forgets half its

* *χρηστότης.*

misery, and to which death comes in a balmy dream. It is considerateness. It is tenderness of feeling. It is warmth of affection. It is promptitude of sympathy. It is love in all its depth, and all its delicacy. It is every melting thing included in that matchless grace, "the GENTLENESS of Christ."*

(6.) Goodness or beneficence. Love in action, love with its hand at the plough, love with the burden on its back. It is love carrying medicine to the sick, and food to the famished. It is love reading the Bible to the blind, and explaining the Gospel to the felon in his cell. It is love at the Sunday class, or in the Ragged-school. It is love at the hovel-door, or sailing far away in the missionary ship. But whatever task it undertakes, it is still the same,—Love following His footsteps, "who went about continually DOING GOOD."

(7.) Faith. Whether it means trust in God, or fidelity to principle and duty, Faith is love in the battle-field. It is constancy following hard after God, when the world drags downward, and the flesh cries, "Halt." It is zeal holding fast sound words when fer-

* 2 Cor. x. 1.

your is costly and sound words are obnoxious. It is firmness marching through fire and through water to the post where duty calls and the captain waits. It is Elijah before Ahab. It is Stephen before the Sanhedrim. It is Luther at Worms. It is the martyr in the flames. Nay, it is a greater than all,—it is Jesus in the desert.* It is Jesus in Gethsemane. It is Jesus on the cross. And it is whosoever pursuing the path, or finishing the work which God has given him, like the great Forerunner, does not fear to die.

(8.) Meekness is love at school,—love at the Saviour's school. It is Christian lowliness. It is the disciple learning to know himself; learning to fear, and distrust, and abhor himself. It is the disciple practising the sweet but self-emptying lesson of putting on the Lord Jesus, and finding all his righteousness in that righteous Other. It is the disciple learning the defects of his own character, and taking hints from hostile as well as friendly monitors. It is the disciple praying and watching for the improvement of his talents, the mellowing of his temper, and the

* Matt. iv. 1-11.

amelioration of his character. It is the loving Christian at the Saviour's feet, learning of Him who is meek and lowly, and finding rest for his own soul.

(9.) Temperance,—Love in the gymnasium, love enduring hardness, love seeking to become healthful and athletic, love striving for the mastery in all things, and bringing the body under. It is superiority to sensual delights, and it is the power of applying resolutely to irksome duties for the Master's sake. It is self-denial and self-control. Fearful lest it should subside to gross carnality, or waste away into shadowy and hectic sentiment, temperance is love alert and timeously astir; sometimes rising before day for prayer, sometimes spending that day on tasks which laziness or daintiness declines. It is love with girt loins, and dusty feet, and hands which work makes horny. It is love with the empty srip but the glowing cheek,—love subsisting on pulse and water, but grown so healthful and so hardy, that it “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Reader, if you abide in Jesus,—if His

words abide in you, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful. Graces such as these will be in you, and abound. Is it so? The great vine-principle, the main element of the Christian character, holy love, does it abound in you? And blending with it, tinging it and deriving sweetness from it, can you detect from time to time joy in God, peace of conscience, patience in suffering, and forgiveness of injury, affectionateness, beneficence, trust in God, and trustworthiness in your place and calling, a lowly willingness to learn and a readiness to take up the cross and deny yourself? When Christians live close to Christ His mind is transfused into theirs. "Purity and love shine forth in their character: meekness and truth guide their footsteps. Nay, in the experience of some, so great has been the change, that the very expression of their countenance has altered. Thus was it with Moses and Stephen. These blessed saints were full of God; Christ was in them of a truth; and his likeness was thus by them peculiarly reflected. Nor is it wonderful that such should sometimes be the case with believers; for, when He thus fills their hearts

with His presence, when His peace dwells there; when the calm joy which He felt, when rejoicing in spirit, reigns there; there must needs be gentleness in their manners, and heavenliness in their talk, and meekness in their eye, and angelic serenity and conscious elevation in their whole countenance.”*

2. Every fruitful branch is purged. “The husbandman purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.” It is the propensity of even fruitful branches to wanton into excessive foliage. But besides spoiling the appearance of the vine, the sap spent on the leaves is stolen from the grapes, and the excessive shade keeps out the sun. The husbandman prunes these shoots and suckers away, and while he makes the branch more sightly, he lets the noon-beams freely in, and makes the clusters richer. So is it with the sincerest Christians. In prosperous weather, when all goes well with them, they are apt to flaunt out in worldliness, and luxury, and pride. They grow selfish. They study their own ease. They seek great things for themselves. And the Hus-

* “Thoughts on Union to Christ,” by Sosthenes. Edin. 1838, p. 213.

bandman, watchful and considerate, consulting His own glory and the fruitfulness of the Vine,—the Husbandman comes, and with the pruning-shears of some afflictive providence, lops the deforming shoots away.

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever.” This was the thought which conveyed reproof and new quickening to a most amiable Christian,* after her greatest bereavement. “I felt that for the last twelve years I had misunderstood the great object for which I was made; that, if not my chief, a very high end with me had been to be happy in my husband and make him happy in me. But now I felt that the highest happiness of a rational mind ought to arise, from answering the purpose for which God made it; and therefore that I ought to be happy in glorifying God, and not in enjoying myself.” And it is to this result that every trial with which God visits His people is tending. It is to shut them up to His service as their chief end, and to Himself as their chiefest joy. It is not to hurt but to heal the tree that the husbandman handles the pruning-hook. In

* Mrs. Susan Huntington.

deep dejection of spirit, Mr. Cecil was pacing to and fro in the Botanic Garden at Oxford, when he observed a fine specimen of the pomegranate almost cut through the stem. On asking the gardener the reason, he got an answer which explained the wounds of his own bleeding spirit. "Sir, this tree used to shoot so strong, that it bore nothing but leaves. I was, therefore, obliged to cut it in this manner, and when it was almost cut through, then it began to bear plenty of fruit." Ye suffering members of Christ, be thankful for every sorrow which weakens a lust or strengthens a grace. Though it should be a cut to the heart, be thankful for every sin and idol shorn away. Be thankful for whatever makes your conscience more tender, your thoughts more spiritual, and your character more consistent. Be thankful that it was the pruning-knife and not the weeding-hook which you felt: for if you suffer in Christ, you suffer with Him; and if with Him you suffer, with Him you shall also reign.

3. A third consequence of abiding in Jesus is prevalency in prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what

ye will, and it shall be done unto you." One reason is that Christ's mind and the Father's agree, and Christ's mind is in the constant Christian. His will is merged in Christ's will; and instead of the petulant and unreasonable requests which worldly or divided hearts are apt to urge, a holy solicitude for God's glory predominates in his prayers. The first petition which his Master taught him covers and qualifies all the rest; and whatsoever he may ask he will not revoke the primary behest, "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name." The believer who abides in Jesus obtains answers to his prayers, because his sanctified will is apt to desire things according to the will of God. But more than this, abiding in Jesus is nearness to God. The man who knows not how to use the Mediator's name, may pray from a sense of duty, or under the urgency of present distress. But if mere duty compel him, there is no comfort nor enlargement in the formal exercise; or if distress constrain him, coming as a stranger, there is no confidence in his approach, and he has no security that God has heard him. He stands in the empty vestibule,

and without obtaining a glance of the Sovereign, at last leaves his petition, uncertain whether it shall ever reach its destination. The sinner who comes in the name of Jesus is ushered at once to the Throne of Grace, and obtains the propitious ear of an all-sufficient God. And the sinner who abides in Jesus, who habitually comes in the Intercessor's name, finds in prayer not only entrance to the palace of the King, but access to that Father whom Christ has taught him to regard with the affectionate security and tender reverence of a child. Prayer is his daily visit to his Heavenly Father's dwelling—the hallowed chamber whose door the name of Jesus opens—the sweet and endeared closet where day by day he has told his griefs and fears, and wants and sins, and from which he has oft departed rich in daily grace and radiant in his Heavenly Father's smile.

Reader, beloved and longed-for, have you understood these things? Do you not allow that your own soul is naturally fruitless and lifeless? Do you not confess that you have no more right to immortality, and no more power for holiness, than the severed sapling

has power to blossom and bear fruit so long as it abides alone? But do you equally perceive that Jesus is the true Vine? Are you persuaded that there is so much life in Him, that if you could only share His life you would live also? so much merit in Him, that if it could only be made your own you would be righteous also? so much holy energy in Him, that could it only be imparted to you, you too would have a spiritual mind, and would delight in doing the will of God? Do you perceive that Christ Jesus is the great Repository of justifying Righteousness and sanctifying grace? Do you distinctly realise these two things — that you yourself are empty, and that in the Lord Jesus all fulness dwells?

But how is the empty scion to profit by the teeming Vine? How is a connexion to be created betwixt the Mediator's fulness and your own vacuity? How is it that Christ and you shall become so truly one that His beauty shall be on you and His spirit within you? We have already said that it is by believing Him, loving Him, copying from Him, and depending on Him. A shorter answer is His own. It is by letting Christ's word enter

and abide. The disciples were made genuine, "clean,"— they got the real Vine-nature from the moment when they admitted Christ's words into willing hearts. And you too will be clean, the graft will strike, from the moment when you credit the word of Jesus. Should you credit that saying of Jesus, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" or should you comply with that other saying of Jesus, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" should you abandon yourself to all the blessedness of believing what the True Witness says; should you suffer your weary soul this day to sink into the arms of that Saviour who rejoices to pardon and is mighty to save—the first entrance of such a word, and the first response of such a faith, would be the date of your better life and the commencement of your union to Christ.

— The graft has taken. At first the juncture may be very slight, a single thread or fibre; and it is not till you try to part them that you find that they are knit together—

that their life is one — and that the force which plucks away the graft must also wound the Vine. And your faith may yet be no more than a single filament. It may be only one point of attachment by which you have got joined to the Lord Jesus. It may be only one solitary sentence—one isolated invitation or promise of which you have got undoubting hold. But hold it fast. If it be the word of Jesus cling to it. There is life in it, and, held fast, it will be life to you. One promise of Jesus credited, one invitation of Jesus accepted, is enough to make such union betwixt Himself and you, that the violence which sunders, if death to you, would be a bleeding heart to Him. Hold fast the faithful saying then, and as you cling to it you will draw closer and closer to the living Vine. The surface of quick contact will enlarge, and as thread by thread, and vein by vein it widens, as word by word and line by line the sayings of Jesus get hidden in your heart, the tokens of vitality will become to yourself and others joyfully distinct. And though you may fear to-day that you have no interest in Christ—think no more of that;

think of what He says. Believe Him steadfastly ; and as sure as He came into the world to save sinners, He will save you. Cleave to His assurances in all their breadth, and though you may feel yourself little better than a reprobate at present, you will be a trophy of redeeming grace in the ages to come. And though you see no fruits of the Spirit yet, let Christ's word abide in you, and you will see them anon. And though you dread lest the faint hold you have got may end in a falling away, hold on till the feeble contact of this moment grow into a complete coalescence, and in joyful assurance of oneness with a sin-pardoning and sanctifying Saviour, you will be able to exclaim, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THE CEDAR.

“The righteous shall grow like the cedar.”

LEBANON has sometimes been regarded as a type of Jesus Christ. Among surrounding mountains the loftiest and fairest, it may suggest to a devout and willing mind that Mighty One, who is fairer than all His fellows.* Its roots of everlasting rock, on the one side struck deep in Palestine, and on the other side reaching far into the Pagan lands, are like that righteousness, “great as the mountains,” which the Son of God wrought out for Jews and Gentiles,† and like the Rock of Ages Himself, amidst His supremacy of power and wisdom, still partaker with His brethren. The streams of water trickling down its slopes, and gushing through its fragrant glens, may give a hint of heavenly influ-

* Ps. xlv. 2.

† Ps. xxxvi. 6; Rom. i. 17.

ences, and the Holy Spirit, through the Saviour's wounded side, flowing down to redeemed souls and onward to a widening Church. Its coronet of snow, glancing in the sunny sky, is like that snowy hair*—the halo of enshrined Divinity—which marks the Son of Man in heaven; whilst its verdant ladder, linking heaven to earth, brings to remembrance the incarnation and Immanuel, "God with us." The corn which gilds its ample skirts, the vines which empurple its royal robe, and the starry blossoms which spangle it all over, may shadow the various joys which have sprung up the memorial of Messiah's advent. But it is not the corn nor the vine nor the lily which is the glory of Lebanon. It is Lebanon growing and waving and scattering fragrance in the cedar,—it is the vegetating rock—the arborescent mountain,—it is this which is Lebanon's glory. And it is not European civilisation and the march of liberty and the diffusion of refinement and learning; nor are they the incidental benefits resulting from His advent which bring the brightest lustre to the name

* Rev. i. 14.

of Jesus. But it is His Spirit embodied — His hidden life again appearing in some beneficent, resolute, lofty believer, — it is the Christ-like Christian who is the glory of Christ.

The first thing that strikes us in the cedar is the firmness of its root. It is not content to drop a few slack fibres into the yielding loam; but it thrusts its sturdy wedge into the cloven rock, and pushes far below the brushwood in search of stronger moorings; and so when the tempest comes down, it springs elastic to the hurricane on its buttress of subterraneous boughs, and amid all the veerings of the blast finds gallant purchase in its network of cables. The cedar has a root. The Christian has faith. He knows whom to believe, and he knows that he believes Him. He is well persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. He is fully assured that Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin, and has efficacy enough to cancel his own. He knows that Christ offers to be a Saviour to himself, and he thankfully consents that He shall. And as his mind is made up on the sin-atoning

efficacy and God-glorifying tendency of the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, he is equally persuaded of the surpassing loveliness and peerless claims of Immanuel Himself. He has discovered so much of grace and truth, so much of Divine glory and transforming goodness in the Beloved of the Father, and is so affected by finding that this Saviour is willing to be his guide through life and his portion in eternity, that his choice is fixed and his heart is won. For him to live will be Christ. And so the beginning of all blessedness is to possess clear views and a conclusive faith. Some deprecate distinct ideas. They prefer music without words — the goodly sound of the Gospel without its significance. And if they have faith, it is faith in confusion — faith without solid foundation. If they be cedars, they are cedars planted in mud — cedars in the sand. The cedars of Lebanon are rooted in the wiry sod, and rivetted in the mountain rock. Know what to believe, and why. Read and hear and think and pray till your realisations be vivid and your convictions sure and steadfast. Never rest till you know beyond all con-

troversy, if you do not know it already, that the Bible is God's book—nor till you exactly understand and can easily state the one way of salvation. Never rest till you be able to intrust your everlasting interests to Jesus Christ, nor till you have some clear evidence that you are born again, and so made meet for the kingdom of heaven. Never rest till you know that your Redeemer liveth, nor till you feel that because He liveth you shall live also. “Your case will be very trying if ever called to part with all for Christ, and not sure of him either.” And your departure from time will be dismal, if it be only the force of sickness that drives you away and not the face of Jesus that draws you—if you see plainly the grisly hand and the levelled shaft of the destroyer to fly from, but not the open arms and smiling embrace of the Saviour to leap into.

The cedar is a thirsty tree. It is distinguished from many of its kindred by its avarice of water. We once saw two of them at Chelsea, which were said to have grown rapidly for a hundred years, till two ponds in the garden were filled with rubbish—after

which they grew no more. And we remembered the words of Ezekiel, "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and a shadowing shroud. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high. His boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt great nations. Thus fair was his grandeur, for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him, the fir-trees were not like him, all the trees of Eden envied him."* And so there are Christians planted by the rivers,—believers of stately growth and luxuriant shadow,—so tall that, even in the garden of God, and among the cedars, they cannot be hid. For clear-eyed, time-penetrating faith, such an overtopping saint was Abraham, who athwart the expanse of nineteen centuries could see Christ's day, and exult with a disciple's joy. For prompt gra-

* Ez. xxxi. 3-9.

titude and ecstatic adoration, such an exalted saint was David, whose "glorying" slept so lightly that the softest touch awoke it,* and whose palpitating psalteries were so accustomed to Hallelujahs, that sorrow struck them out as readily as joy, and oft as he changed the cords the loyal harp would only sing the praises of Jehovah. For high-hearted devotion to his God, such an elevated saint was Daniel, whose lofty statesmanship, and spotless career, and lovely bearing to his brethren, were but the various expressions of the self-same thing to which he owed his miraculous escapes and his frequent revelations, — "O man greatly beloved, thy *prayer* is heard." And for burning love to Jesus Christ, self-forgetful, self-consuming, such a pre-eminent saint was Paul, to whom the beloved image of his Master shone in every type and shadow of the old economy; who could trace the myrrh-dropping fingers on the tongs and snuffers of the tabernacle; who could hear the voice of Jesus through the roar of the Adriatic, and lean upon His arm before Nero's judgment-seat; to whom the

* Psalm lvii. 8.

affliction in which Christ came was more welcome than an angel visitor, and as the summons to Christ's presence, death itself the object of desire. Such noble and commanding characters have there been, that none could hide them, and none were like them, and under the awe or the attraction of their goodness, good men wished to resemble them. "The trees of Eden envied them." It is not only Secretary Cecil who could have changed the palace for the preacher's cottage, rightly declaring, "There dwells as much happiness as can be known on earth;" but men of God have been provoked to press forward by the higher attainments of their brethren. "In one I have been animated by ardent activity for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls. In another I was pleased and softened by conspicuous meekness and gentleness of spirit. In a third, I was excited to love and good works by the fervent charity and brotherly kindness I beheld; and in a fourth, I was led to abase myself, and confess the pride of my heart, from the humility and brokenness of spirit which struck me." But when you come to look

closely into the matter, and inquire to what secret cause these lofty cedars owe their growth; whence is it that their influential and impressive characters have derived their admirable grace, you always find that communion with God is the comprehensive source of their pre-eminent piety. They are abundant in religious exercises. They are mighty in the Scriptures. They are men of prayer. They are frequenters of the sanctuary. They are lovers of Christian fellowship. They are delighted observers of the Sabbath. But, after all, ordinances are to them but avenues or audience chambers. It is a Bible in which God speaks, a closet in which God hearkens, a sanctuary in which God's countenance shines, which they desire of the Lord, and seek to attain. And finding these, they find the living God Himself. Their fellowship is with the Father and the Son. They grow into the knowledge of the Divine perfections. They grow in reverence and trust and love. They grow in perceptions of their own infinite vileness, and consequently in appreciation of the blood which pardons, and the Spirit who cleanses. They

grow in self-distrust, and in dependence on God. They grow in self-condemnation, and in desire for that world where they will sin no more. And whilst they are solidly growing in these inward experiences, they have, unawares to themselves, expanded the long branches and shadowing shroud of a great cedar. They have become the admiration and resort of others. The affections of many nestle in their boughs, and under their shadow dwell those who seek to profit by their counsel and their company. And just as there is growth in the multitude of waters, so there is decrepitude and decay where the waters fail. Like the Chelsea cedars, you will meet with professors who, for many years together, have not grown an inch. The rubbish of secularity or idleness has filled up the two pools of Bible reading and secret prayer; and a stunted top, and a bundle of scrubby branches, a form of godliness, and a few Evangelical phrases, are all that remains to commemorate their better days and prosperous beginning.

Another thing notable in the cedar is the vigour of its goodly boughs. Some trees,

especially trees of the forest, growing in groups, have fragile boughs, and cannot abide in bleak and windy places. But the cedar is not more remarkable for the depth of its roots than for the strength of its branches. Not grafted on nor jointed in, but the brawny limbs deep-rooted in the massy bole, presenting a broad surface to the sun, and a thin edge to the tempest, too elastic to snap, and too sturdily set in their socket to flutter in the breeze, these boughs are the very emblem of graceful strength and vigorous majesty. The Christian is a man of faith, and therefore a man of principle. His creed is principle. His practice is the same. Roots and branches make one tree; and faith and practice make one Christian. And those are the noblest and most serviceable Christians whose convictions are so firm, and whose characters are so strong, that nothing can affright them from their faith, and nothing deter them from their duty. In this respect, that father of the Church was a goodly cedar, who, when nearly the whole of Christendom had yielded to the God-denying heresy, lifted up in banishment his solitary

voice, proclaiming the Saviour's Deity, "*Athanasius contra mundum.*" And they were goodly cedars those Waldensian worthies, who, amid the rocks and snows of Piedmont, through five-and-thirty persecutions, held fast the faith of Jesus, and though gashed by the Savoyard spear, and scorched by the Romish fagot, carried down from earliest time to the present hour Christ's pure Gospel. And he was a goodly cedar that Knox, who never feared the face of man. The fire of surrounding martyrdoms but warmed his roots, and gave a rush of quicker zeal to his fervent spirit; and whilst the axe of tyrants threatened, he firmly stood his ground till the idols fell, and the evangel flourished, and Scotland was free. And so was that Saxon Luther, whom the Emperor and his legions tried to terrify, but in the strength of God he came on them so mighty, that men and devils were dismayed;—that Luther whom the Pope's emissary tried to bribe, but was obliged to write back to his master, "This German beast has no regard for gold." And so were those goodly cedars, Huss and Jerome and Ridley and Patrick Hamilton, and many

more, who counted their lives not dear that they might keep the testimony of Jesus; and amidst flames and torture finished their joyful course,—goodly cedars, which burning were not consumed. And not to multiply instances of confessor courage and martyr heroism, it is the self-same holy energy and decision of Christian character, which have developed in self-denying services and costly sacrifices. Francke devoting all his time and all his fortune to his Orphan Hospital;—Vanderkemp, labouring as a brickmaker that he might be better fitted for his mission to the Hottentots;—the “Apostle of the Indians,” wringing the rain-water from his clothes, and lying all night in the forest with nothing but a tree to shelter him;—Richard Baxter, refusing a bishopric;—John Wesley, preferring active labour to the preparation of a pamphlet in his own defence, “Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation?”—those in whom Christian principle has been so strong, that at its bidding they have abandoned lucrative situations and tempting prospects, that they might keep holy the

Sabbath, that they might preserve inviolate honesty, truthfulness, and integrity, that they might maintain a conscience void of offence; all these have put forth in their day the strength of the goodly cedar.

The cedar "grows" from year to year. The solid timber of its trunk grows denser and more compact, and new layers are added to its girth, so that when it is eventually felled, you can almost say, by counting the concentric rings, how many summers it has seen. A living Christian grows. His character confirms. Duties, which when first performed were a crucifixion of the flesh and a triumph of faith, become easy and familiar habits. Promises, the fulfilment of which he at first credited on the mere authority of God, have now received the yea and amen of a long experience. In the homely words of Robert Bruce, "When I was young the Lord compelled me to live by faith, but now He feeds His old servant with great morsels of sense." Religion has become his better and more beautiful nature. He is past the danger of being ashamed of Christ. The awkwardness and fear of man, which made

him once so fond of obscurity, and so afraid of the Jews, have passed away, and he is no longer averse to be ranked among the peculiar people, and regarded as a disciple of Jesus. There are apologies which he has ceased to make, and difficulties which he has ceased to feel. The lions of his youth have disappeared from the street, and the grasshopper, which was a burden to his early faith, is no disturbance to his maturer piety. There are sins which no longer beset him, and fears which no longer distress him. He has outgrown the spirit of speculation and controversy, and in meek docility sits down at the Master's feet, listening to—Thus saith the Lord. He has lost the desire for theological novelties and religious curiosities, and is only anxious for such new things as come out of the old Bible Treasury. He has outlived the dogmatism and harsh judging of his sanguine prime, and no longer calls for fire from heaven on the Samaritans. He has left behind him the vanity which gave an air of flippancy and self-conceit to his earlier efforts, and raised a prejudice against himself, if not a distaste at religion.

And, perhaps, he has outlived the fear of dying. At one time there was something ghastly in the look of the last enemy: but now, looking unto Jesus, he has learned to look beyond it. "There is something in the heart of Christ, and something in my own, which will not be at rest till I be set down upon Mount Zion. My eyes are turning gladly towards death, as the only sure period of His absence, and of these agonies of separation."*

Reader, would you know whether you are growing in grace? improving and advancing in personal Christianity? Then tell us, Is your faith more firm? Have the truths to which you once consented strengthened into settled convictions? Have they become first principles, and do they instinctively prompt you to corresponding action? Is your piety more pervasive? Does it decide your conduct, and give the casting vote in doubtful conjunctures of your history? "Does it regulate your daily demeanour as a husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant? Does it come abroad with you, out of your closets

* Letters of Dr. John Love.

into your houses, your shops, your fields? Does it journey with you, and buy and sell for you?" Does it stand at your elbow, and keep watch at the door of your lips? Is your heart larger? Instead of looking merely on your own things, have you learned to look on the things of others? Do you love the brotherhood? And however much you may prize your own denomination, do you rejoice to hear that godliness revives and religion spreads in other communions? Have you a public spirit?—a missionary spirit?—a spirit of zeal? In the efforts made to protect the Sabbath, to educate the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, and ameliorate the condition of the working classes, do your whole souls accord? Have the present objects of philanthropy and patriotism your suffrage, your sympathy, your prayers? But, above all, does your love to the Lord Jesus grow? Whether it be in this world or another that you first expect to see Him as He is, do you desire the sight? Do you distinctly feel that the same Saviour who was such a disappointment to the Pharisees, and who, after He had been so long time with

them, was so little known by Philip and Thomas and the rest,—are you sure that He is just the Saviour whom you desire, the very one whose presence will make, in any place, your heaven? Have you beheld His glory, full of grace and truth; and has that glory so inflamed your spirit that, like the ship to its haven, like the needle to its magnet, like the dove to its window, your soul will only reach its final rest when it comes home to Himself to depart no more?

The Maronites ascribe a singular faculty to the cedar. They say that on the approach of snowy weather it bends its branches upwards, so as to receive the falling flakes on the sides of a slender pyramid.* Prepared for the tempest, it only looks more graceful under it, and the storm which could not rend

* A French traveller of last century relates this, and apparently believes it. The cedar does not retain its self-protecting instinct in this country. There was a noble specimen in the Royal Gardens at Kew, on which a few winters ago the snow lay so heavy, that one windy night its great branches fractured, with a report so loud that the villagers mistook it for the firing of guns.

its boughs soon melts in irrigation round its roots. And though the cedar's power to predict the tempest may exist only in the imagination of these sons of the mountain, the lesson is to us not the less instructive. It is in a way somewhat similar that the Lord prepares His people for trial. Sometimes they have a presentiment of approaching calamity, and are led to cry, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near." But often and still more mercifully the coming evil is hid, and all their preparation is unwonted heavenly-mindedness. Like the cedar lifting up its boughs, they lift up their hearts, and know not that it is their Lord putting them in an attitude to bear the storm. They feel a joy unspeakable to-day, and find the explanation in the grief of the morrow. But still the joy of the Lord has strengthened them, the self-devotion and ascending affections of these preparatory moments have put them in the posture on which the tempest comes down most lightly. "On Easter Sunday, 1824," writes one, "I rose before six in the morning, earlier than I had been able to do for a month before, on account of indis-

position. I kneeled down a minute or two after I had risen, and completely resigned myself to God, giving myself up to Him in a way which I had never been able to do before. I rose from my knees with a sacred feeling that I was not my own, being 'bought with a price,' but the actual property of another, who I was perfectly willing should do what he pleased with his own. I had a peculiarly calm and composed state of mind all the day. In the evening I coughed twice, and broke a blood-vessel."* And this was the beginning of the illness from which she never finally recovered, but during which divine consolations never forsook her. In the Journal of Mrs. Fletcher one entry closes, "Certainly I have now scarce any cross. Thou hast made my cup to run over. Yea, thou hast made me to forget all my sorrows. There is not a comfort I can wish for which I have not; but, Lord, I want more grace." The next begins, "When I wrote last, I was arrived at the summit of human felicity. But, oh! how shall I write it!—On the

* "Memorials of Two Sisters." London, 1843; p. 114.

14th of August the dreadful moment came. The sun of my earthly joys for ever set, and the cloud arose which casts the sable on all my future life. At half-past ten that Sabbath night, I closed the eyes of my beloved." But from another passage it appears, that just before the attack which ended his earthly labours, Mr. Fletcher and herself had been led to a very express devotement of themselves to God; and the consequence was that her startled spirit soon found its quiet rest again. A thankful sense of her mercies made one pang the less in losing them; and the self-dedication in which she had so lately joined prepared her for the elevated and beneficent life which she subsequently led, worthy of one who had found a Husband in her Maker. And as the Lord secretly prepares His people for trial, so He supports them under it. Like the snow which shapes the cedar into a new and graceful figure, sorrow gives the Christian a new aspect of loveliness. It brings out the meekness, the endurance, and elasticity of the better nature within him; and it evinces how invulnerable is his hidden life. It was the cheerful remark

of Mr. Wilberforce, when his wealth took wing, "I know not why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." Dr. Arnold had a sister who during twenty years of sickness made it a rule never once to allude to her sufferings; and there have been many of God's servants whom His Spirit has so mightily strengthened that it was a great sight, it was treading ground which God's presence made holy, when called to witness their patient endurance and joyful constancy. And like the cedar, ready for trial and supported under it, the believer is the better for it when it has passed away. What is spring but winter melted? What is the sap which now gushes vital in these branches, but the snow which lately covered them with its frosty load? And what is vigorous piety, but temptation vanquished? What is experience, but tribulation thawed by patience? And what is heaven itself, but light affliction transformed to exceeding glory?

We might mention other properties of the cedar. Like the palm, it is evergreen.

Though a native of the mountains and used to wintry weather, it never sheds its leaves. And these leaves, as well as its bark and wood, are aromatic. Even when the snow is loading its branches, the cedar is fragrant; but it is in those blessed and vernal days when snows are melting, when the April sun is lavishing his light and heat to the balmy air, and the whole life of the mountain is gushing through the opening flowers and carolling birds and leaping lambs,—it is then that in the bursting of fresh foliage and in the flow of beaded gums, the cedar loads the air with incense, and flings afar “the smell of Lebanon.” And so a gracious soul is ever fresh, ever vital, ever green. But there are times when the winter is past and the Sun of Righteousness shines,—the April season of the soul; times when a whole tide of happy life flows into the dilating spirit, and the joy of Jesus circulates expansive and reviving through every opening faculty and enlarging grace. And it is then—then, when every twig of the cedar is tufted with new softness and beauty, and when the nestling birds are singing in the branches—it

is then when the love of the Spirit circulates anew, and the soul exults in God its Saviour; it is then that it is good to be near the happy and fresh-filled believer. In such society, and at such a season, the atmosphere is odour. The south wind wakes, and the spices flow. Heaven has opened, and the winter fled. God smiles, and the soul expands. The Holy Spirit stirs within, and verdure mantles to the topmost bough. And in the wafted gladness and delicious air, every alert disciple feels "It is good to be here."

We might have added, the cedar is sound to the last; and the believer perseveres to the end, "to show that the Lord is upright; He is a rock, and there is no unrighteousness with Him." But we only mention one particular farther. The palm is most productive at the last. It brings forth in old age its largest, richest fruit. The cedar is most useful when dead. It is most productive when its place knows it no more. There is no timber like it. Firm in the grain, and capable of the finest polish, the tooth of no insect will touch it, and Time himself can

hardly destroy it. Diffusing a perpetual fragrance through the chambers which it ceils, the worm will not corrode the book which it protects, nor the moth corrupt the garment which it guards. All but immortal itself, it transfuses its amaranthine qualities to the objects around it; and however stately in the forest, or brave on the mountain's brow, it is more serviceable in Solomon's palace, and it receives an illustrious consecration when set up as pillars in the Temple, and carved into door-posts and lintels for the House of the Lord. Every Christian is useful in his life, but the goodly cedars are most useful afterwards. Joseph while he lived saved much people alive, and his own lofty goodness was an impressive and elevating pattern to his relenting and admiring brethren. But as an instance of special providence, and an example of untarnished excellence amidst terrible temptations, Joseph dead has spoken to more than Joseph living. The sweet singer of Israel while he lived taught many to handle the harp, and infected not a few with his thankful, adoring spirit. But David being dead yet singeth, and you

can hardly name the psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, of which the lesson was not learnt from the son of Jesse. Paul in his living day preached many a sermon, and made many a convert to the faith of Jesus. But Paul being dead yet preacheth, and they were sermons from his sepulchre which converted Luther, and Zuingle, and most of our modern evangelists. And Luther is dead, but the Reformation lives. Calvin is dead, but his vindication of God's free and sovereign grace will never die. Knox, Melville, and Henderson, are dead, but Scotland still retains a Sabbath and a Christian peasantry, a Bible in every house, and a school in every parish. Bunyan is dead, but his bright spirit still walks the earth in its "Pilgrim's Progress." Baxter is dead, but souls are still quickened by the "Saints' Rest," and the "Call to the Unconverted." Cowper is dead, but the "golden apples" are still as fresh as when newly gathered in the "silver basket" of the Olney Hymns. Eliot is dead, but the missionary enterprise is young. Henry Martyn is dead, but who can count the apostolic spirits who, phœnix-wise, have started

from his funeral pile? Howard is dead, but modern philanthropy is only commencing its career. Raikes is dead, but the Sabbath-schools go on. Wilberforce is dead, but the Negro will find for ages a protector in his memory.

And though you, Christian brother, may not occupy a place of prominence, you may fill a place of usefulness. If not a cedar of the mountain, you may be a cedar of the vale. Seek a clear understanding of scriptural truth. Be fully persuaded in your mind. See to it that a living Saviour be indeed the sun of your affections and the centre of your desires. Cultivate a strenuous piety. Alike combat intellectual laziness and spiritual lethargy. Be ready for every good work. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you. And pray that the Lord would maintain you ever ready for His providential will. Instead of yielding to every passing influence, seek a character so consistent, so meekly resolute, so cheerfully devout, that sin will find no sanction in your silence, and irreligion no excuse in your gloom. And more especially among familiar

friends and in your house at home, strive to walk wisely in a perfect way. Begin and end the day with God. Let salt season your speech, and let Christian elevation pervade your demeanour. Let the peace of God rule in your heart, and let its power at once to strengthen and soften be seen in that majestic principle with which worldliness dares not to tamper, and that continual benignity which makes even worldliness wistful. And thus, when you yourself "grow" here no longer, even the irreligious will think of something very lofty and lovely when they think of you.

THE PALM.

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.”

DEAR READER,—You have named the name of Jesus. You have been led to avow yourself the Saviour's disciple. And, if sincere and intelligent in your profession, you are very different from the multitude, and from what you yourself once were. To you Christ is now a real person. You are persuaded that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. You believe that 1800 years ago he poured out His precious blood on a cross at Jerusalem, as an atonement for sin, and by His obedience to death brought in everlasting righteousness. You are assured that He is now at the Father's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, bestowing repentance and the remission of sins. Your own hope is in Christ. You know not another name to which you

can trust your eternal interests, but Christ Jesus you can and do rely on. And since you ascertained Christ's ability and willingness to save, there has been a change in your affections and hopes, your principles and habits. Your temperament may be cold; nevertheless, by you Christ is loved and adored. Your faith may be feeble and your prospects confused; still you have learned to recognise a Friend in Immanuel and a home in Heaven. Your motives may be mixed and unstable; still your obedience is new, and you often find a holy impulse, a filial instinct, the joy of salvation or the love of Christ constraining you. Your character may be very defective; but still you can perceive that it is altered—for now you love to pray and read the Bible. You are happy among the excellent of the earth. The meditation of God is sweet, the day of God is welcome, and the house of God is dear. If a Christian at all, your case will be another fulfilment of the universal rule, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

But along with the hope of sincerity you may have a painful sense of deficiency. You

feel that you are neither so happy nor so holy as a Christian might be. You would like to reach a character more explicit, a faith more firm, and an experience more vivid than are sought by ambiguous and commonplace professors. You perceive that it is a high mark which the Gospel sets before you, and that the consistent Christian is not only a new but a noble creature. But if such completeness and consistency of character be the objects of your desire, you should make them the subject of earnest thought and prayerful effort. With the Bible for a directory and the Holy Spirit for a teacher, there is nothing august and nothing amiable in vital Christianity which you may not long and hope to see developed in yourself. The Father is glorified when disciples are fruitful. The Church is strong when its members are mutual supports and incitements. And the Gospel spreads when living epistles commend it.

We have selected as mottoes two Scriptural emblems, the Palm and the Cedar,—the one representing personal religion in its gracefulness, the other piety in its grandeur; the one, the beauty of true holiness, the

other, its majesty: and both together the blessedness of its possessor and the benefits which he confers on others. Having already made a few remarks on the one, we now proceed to the other.

There is something instructive in the very place where the Palm-tree grows. It is not in the sheltered depths of the forest, nor with its roots struck deep in the fertile loam. It grows in the desert. All round the ridgy sand is burning, and often its pillar of verdure springs direct from the scorching dust. And it is in the desert that trees of righteousness grow. This earth is a land of emptiness. Its mould is not the soil from which you would expect aught spiritual or holy to spring. And when in a world like this—a world so sensual and depraved and so embittered against the living God,—when in such a world you alight on a man of blameless life and devout disposition and heavenly aspirations, it is the same surprise as encountering the bright and laden Palm on the dusty edge of the desert. You may feel that your own is not the favourable place for cultivating personal piety. Your abode is not a cottage

imbedded in the calm of rural Sabbaths, where the over-arching firmament or the leafy solitude invites you, Eden-wise, to communion with God. Your lot is not cast under the protective shadow of a domestic sanctuary, or amid the innocent safeguards and virtuous inspiration of a hallowed and godly home. You live in a city where the dust of business is drifting all the week, and the din of occupation disturbs the day of rest. You are planted in a lonely lodging, or a prayerless household. And if your soul is to thrive at all, it must learn to "flourish" among strangers and scoffers. You must be a man of principle in the midst of profligacy, and a man of faith while surrounded with infidelity. "Thou, God, seest me!" must be inscribed in the dingy counting-room, and must move before you in letters of endearing light through the glare of the gas-lit mart. You must carry Bible rules into scenes of trickery and tumult, and must not suffer cunning men to beguile you of your simplicity, or knavish men to rob you of your equanimity. You must learn to be holy and harmless though in daily contact with duplicity, and must strive

to lead Enoch's life: for, were Enoch living now, he would walk with God in the streets of London.

Though the Palm starts bolt up from the burning sand, the sand is not its sustenance. The dust may have swept hot and stifling round its stem;—but clear that dust away. The sand grows humid as you dig, and, by the time you reach the white fibres of the tap, the veins of water flow. And, as, by and by, you gaze on the fringy rootlets floating in the well, you discern the secret of its joyous growth. No matter that the sky is brass and the desert dust, when crystal life is throbbing perennial and plentiful below. Doubtless this is a dry and thirsty land; but it is the land where ever and anon the eye is gladdened by some goodly Palm. In strange and unexpected places you meet with fresh and lofty Christians. You wonder how they thrive. They do not grow as the lily; for the lily is found in green pastures, and they do not belong to a lifesome communion. Nor do they spring as the willow; for it springs by the water-courses, and they have not the benefit of the purest ordinances and the most refreshful

ministrations. They are trees of the desert, like Enoch among the giant sinners of an early world ; like Joseph among the wizards and beast-worshippers of Egypt ; like Daniel in voluptuous Babylon ; like David Brainerd among Indian savages ; like Henry Martyn in stony-hearted Persia. Their life is hid. So pure amidst depravity, so loyal to God amidst idolatry, so devout and fervent amidst atheism and blasphemy, their heavenly-mindedness is a miracle. But beneath the dusty surface of this godless world, there is a well of water springing up to everlasting life. There is no spot so barren, and no soil so burning, no place nor period so adverse, but faith can find the Holy Spirit there. It needs only faith's penetrating root descending beneath the things which do appear,* to fetch up spiritual refreshment and invigoration where others pine and die. From a secret source the believer in Jesus draws his life. The morning portion of the word, the morning prayer, the morning meditation ; these are the "stolen waters" which keep him green all day ; and even in the desert there

* Heb. xi. 1.

is a dew which, descending on his branches overnight, brings him forth fragrant and vegete to the morrow. You, my friend, who lead a life of secularity or drudgery,—you who are often sighing, “Lord, what a wretched land is this;” remember that it is the land of the Bible, the land of prayer, the land of the promises, and, above all, the land of the Comforter’s presence and power. To say nothing of periodic rains and weekly showers, the affluent irrigation of sanctified Sabbaths and communion feasts,—a daily text and daily prayer, with the whole heart in them, would make you flourish like the Palm. You would realise something of the life of God in your own soul, and your shining, healthful aspect would draw forth the exclamation, “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.”

The Palm is a tree of remarkable beauty. Apart from all its associations there is something in its slim uprightness, its verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes, which glads the eye that gazes. And so is there in a person truly gracious. If your character be completely Christian; if

there be in it so much of grace that the gracious has all grown natural ; if your affections be brought obedient to Christ Jesus ; if your maxims of conduct be scriptural, and your motives in acting Christian, there will be instruction and joy in beholding you. Your growth will be erect and aspiring. The ivy creeps and the bramble trails, but the Palm, in its perpendicular uprightness, dwells on high, and seeks the things above. And the fairest Christians are those whose pure and lofty affections lift them sublimely above all that is low and debasing, and whose heaven-pointing demeanour betokens an upgoing heart. Whosoever is anxious to become a consistent and conspicuous Christian, must keep aloof from the mean enjoyments and paltry expedients, the tattling curiosity and malignant constructions, of a world incredulous of the highest goodness, because incapable of exerting it ; and, aware that no permanent motive to well-doing can be found here below, he must seek it in that Saviour whose smile it elicits, and in that Heaven where it all will be found again. Some trees are crooked, but the Palm is straight, and,

standing forth in its unbending altitude, spreads all its foliage to the sun. And, if yours be a flourishing Christianity, there will be no crooks nor zigzags in it. A conscience void of offence will give a gay security to your goings out and comings in. Never meeting the neighbour whom you have injured, nor the man who has aught ignominious to allege against you; haunted by no sense of hollowness, and no forebodings for the future; harbouring no bitter feelings, and hiding no sinister designs, you will readily come to the light, and never fear that it will make your deeds too manifest. And just as your frank, explicit character will declare you a child of day, your evenly sense and the sweetness of your disposition will justify you as one of Wisdom's children. There are trees which have knots of weakness in their substance, and gnarled projections on their surface. But the Palm is not only erect and tall; its stem is fair and even. From the root to the topmost tuft, it springs round, elegant, and equal, with neither galls nor disfiguring bunches. There are crotchety Christians; but they are not palms.

There are professors so peculiar that you can never count on them; what they are to-day is no presumption for what they shall be to-morrow. They may have many good points and noble qualities; but their fellowship is marred, and their usefulness frustrated, by whims which no sagacity can predict, and caprices to which not even "the patience of the saints" can conform. Christian reader, cultivate a meek and quiet spirit; that magnanimity which is calm and considerate, and which tries to look at this day's grievances in to-morrow's light; that elastic and happy temper which, being the growth of grace, shall be independent of the weather,—that serenity which, whether in fog, or sickness, or hunger, or in sunshine, and health, and bodily comfort, "is not easily provoked;" that "charity which suffereth long and is kind, which hopeth all things, endureth all things." And if this grace be in you,—if your spirit be so ruled that men find you the same yesterday and to-day,—your heart fixed amidst vexations, and amidst all its trials your temper tranquil, they will perceive that the religion from above is full

of good fruits, and will admire its peaceful fruits in you.

Nor must we forget that foliage which is one chief glory of the palm. Each several frond in its graceful arching, and its long and taper leaflets, with the gloss of unfading verdure, is such a natural symbol of hope and joy and exultation, that the palm-branch has stood for ages the emblem of victory. It was twisted into the verdant booths at the Feast of Tabernacles; it was borne aloft by the multitude when they escorted Messiah to his coronation in Jerusalem. "And lo! before the throne in heaven, and before the Lamb, a great multitude, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."* And every believer should flourish like the palm. Not only should "his leaf never fade," † it should not even sully. Some leaves are so viscid and clammy, that the dust settles and adheres. And some professors, who perhaps are genuine, are so powdered over with a constant secularity that their leaf is always dingy. They are wayfaring trees; and if the shower of some special ordinance or solemnising dispen-

* Rev. vii. 9.

† Psalm i. 3.

sation should wash their foliage into a momentary freshness, the cares of this life soon deface it again. But in the heart of the desert the palm contrives to cast the dust quick as it alights, and keeps its slender leaflets pure. And so, Christian brethren, be it your endeavour to maintain not only a blameless, but a beauteous character, the full circulation and the fresh attire of a flourishing Christianity. You must go into the world to-morrow. You must do many dull and irksome things, or many things apparently remote from religion. But if you have found out the secret of spiritual-mindedness, you will come home fit for the prayer-meeting, or for the Christian friend, or the family worship. In the midst of all the secularities which have been floating around, you will keep your garments clean. The palm has no holiday clothing. Its branch is equally green whether an emperor or an outlaw pass under it. Summer and winter it is always the same. And so a beauteous Christianity is that which loses none of its loveliness to the eye that oftenest views it. If you be respectable in public,—if you be serious and fervent in the

sanctuary,—if your conversation be rational or religious in society;—but if you be common-place at home, —if you be cross and censorious, frivolous and silly, worldly and wearisome at your own fireside,—if you be one of those trees which need brushing before they are fit to be seen, such dusty affinities prove that your nature is not that of the palm. If full of sap your leaf will be evergreen; and those who know you best will love you most, and be the best persuaded of your simplicity and godly sincerity. And to crown the whole; if yours be a palmy growth, yours will be a religion of happiness and praise. A fair sight it is when the breeze flits by, and every ray of the feathery coronet twinkles to the morning sun,—the desert's anthem,—the palm-tree's orison. Nature gave the hint to man, and to God's glory waved her verdant plumes before the victor learned to wave them to his own. And so, dear friend, if yours be the right religion, it will be imbued with blessedness and clothed with praise. You “will be fat and flourishing,” “to show that the Lord is upright.” Through the greatness of his work your heart will be

made right glad. His greatest work redemption, will often swell in upon your spirit with new surprise, and the Christ that is yours, and the Comforter that is yours, and the heaven which is soon to be yours, will bear back your waking glory into astonished silence and heart-murmured adoration; and lesser gifts, less, but most precious, will be a sweet relief to the overmastering emotion; and, by giving outlet to the gratitude, you will sanctify the gift and seal it in sacredness and sweet memorial on your own soul. Habitual faith will give perennial cheerfulness. If "fat" you will be "flourishing." The peace of God within will force off the withered twigs of care and foreboding and worldly-mindedness, and give you the daily freshness of one careful for nothing. "I am now," writes one, "near the end of my warfare. I never had such a variety of affairs to manage as a man in so much business as yourself, but I had a large young family very dear to me, and not enough for their maintenance from year to year; and, in case of my death, they were to be destitute. I was, however, wonderfully free and cheerful in my heart. I

think I should not have been more so, if I had been without a child. My preservative was wholly this : 'He that hath the Son hath life.' A full and powerful conviction of this truth was attended with constant prayer for them and myself, that we might have this one thing needful, which by this means grew in price and value. Was Christ enough for peace, comfort, and joy to the first Christians ; and is He not now the same ? Will He not be enough for me and my children ?" And to like purport writes another : "Yesterday I was very much taken up in house affairs. Various things occurred which would at some times have been a burden, but everything seemed blest. These words were all day the language of my heart :

“ ‘ With thee conversing I forget
All time, and toil, and care ;
Labour is rest, and toil is sweet,
If thou, my God, be there.’ ”

Few trees can equal the Palm in absolute usefulness. Its shadow refreshes the weary traveller. Its sweet and abundant fruit restores his strength. And when his soul faileth him for thirst, its welcome telegraph

announces, Here is water. The light-house of the wilderness, nature's simple hostelry, its beacon has darted life into many a glassy eye, and has forwarded to the home, which he hardly hoped to see again, many a sinking wanderer;—so that glad associations and grateful offices have gone far to enhance its beauty. And in the tender mercy of God there are distributed through the Church of Christ, and consequently through the world, many persons who, in beneficence, flourish like the palm. To do good and communicate they never forget. They cannot avoid it. It is now spontaneous with them, for God gave them the disposition when He gave them their new nature. Like a cool shadow in a scorching day, their counsel revives the perplexed, and their sympathy cheers the sad. Like the clustering dates ungrudgingly showered on the passenger, their generosity and hospitality are a boon to all who need them. And like the palm-tree pointing to the hidden well, their sure direction guides the weary seeker to the Fountain where he drinks and lives for ever. Such a one was Barnabas, the Son of Consolation, in whose large heart and ten-

der wisdom, afflicted consciences and wounded spirits found the balm which healed them, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." And such were Gaius, and Aquila, and Lydia, and Dorcas, whose willing roof and untiring bounty made churches their debtors, and who found in the prayers of the poor their payment. And such was Philip the Evangelist, who put the timely question to the Ethiopian, and business-like and brother-like sat down in the chariot beside him, and pointed out so plain that way to heaven which the earnest stranger was so fain to find. And such in later times have been many of the Church Universal's worthies: Bernard Gilpin, whose open hand and inviting door softened towards the Gospel the rude heart of Northumberland; John Thornton, of whom it was remarked, "Were there but a thousand loving Christians of great opulence like-minded with him, the nation would be convinced of the good operation of the Gospel;" William Wilberforce, who, in addition to countless acts of considerate philanthropy, sought out and sent to college young men of principle and promise, and saw his liberality rewarded when

they became judges of the land, and distinguished ministers of the Gospel; Howell Harris, who filled his Trevecca mansion with scores of disabled and destitute Christians, and, amidst the tears of a hundred adopted children, passed away to that beloved Saviour whom hungry he fed, and a stranger he had taken in;* Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, who devoted her long widowhood to prayer and active kindness, and re-peopled her desolate home with orphans and the pious poor; John Newton, whose dusky Coleman-street chamber shone with a heavenly radiance in many a memory, for there, amid his affectionate explanations, the cross stood out to their tearful view, and for the first time they learned to find in a Saviour's side the double refuge from sin and from sorrow. And such in your place and your measure may each of you who are Christians at all, aspire to become. "Herein is the Father glorified that ye bear *much* fruit." Kind looks, kind words, kind deeds, advice thoughtfully and honestly given, trouble cheerfully taken, visits to the sick and the mourning, when your heart goes with you and

* Matt. xxv. 35, 40.

you are in a mood for prayer, gifts of your substance, large enough to make you interested in the cause to which you contribute, and intercessions as earnest as these gifts are cordial: such are true fruits of righteousness; such are the genuine produce of a thriving Palm.

And not to enlarge too much, we merely notice the circumstance that this interesting tree is productive to the last, and brings forth its best fruit in old age. The best dates are said to be gathered when it has reached a hundred years. So is it with eminent Christians: the older the better; the older the more beautiful; nay, the older the more useful; and, different from worldlings, the older the happier. The best Christians are these who improve to the end, who grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the very close of life. They loved Him at first, but now they love Him more. At first they were selfish, and only sought to escape from wrath; now they are jealous of the Saviour's honour, and long to be saved from sin. At first they only thought of the Priest; now they perceive the Priest upon a throne, and love not only

the Saviour's cross, but the Saviour's yoke and the Saviour's laws. One Jesus is their King. And they grow in knowledge of themselves. The truth to which they once assented becomes a deep-wrought experience. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And the discovery of this depravity, the knowledge how debased and worthless their nature has become, instead of making them morose and bitter towards their fellow-sharers in the fall, makes them lenient and considerate. They know themselves too well to expect perfection in their friends, and find brethren to whom they can stick close in the face of obvious failings; and even when they hear of awful wickedness, indignation is chastened by compassion and humility. It is something of the old Reformer's feeling when he saw the malefactor led to prison:—"There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." And they grow in wisdom. Long experience, and still more "the secret of the Lord," dispassionate observation and heavenly-mindedness, have given them sagacity; and sometimes in homely adages, sometimes in direct and sober counsel, they deal forth that mellow wisdom.

And they grow in spirituality. We have seen those aged pilgrims to whom earthly things at last grew insipid; they had no curiosity for the news of the day, and little taste for fresh and entertaining books. They stuck to God's testimonies, and you never went in to see them but the ample Bible lay open on the table or the counterpane; and they could tell the portion which had been that morning's food, or the meditation of the previous night. The Word of God dwelt in them so richly that you could see they were becoming fit to dwell with God; for when a mind has become thoroughly scriptural, it wants but another step to make it celestial. And the last harvest came, and the last gleanings of their precious words, and when next we went that way their place knew them no longer. They were flourishing in the courts of God's house on high, and we should sit under their shadow and be regaled by their goodness no more. But when we recollected how fair their Christian profession was, how beneficent and servicable they had ever been, and remembered that their last days were their brightest, and their last fruits their fairest, we said over

to ourselves, "The righteous shall flourish like the Palm-tree. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Dear Christian Reader, when your own ear cannot hear it, may this be your eulogy; when your own eye cannot read it, may this be your epitaph. In the meanwhile, for the sake of that Saviour who is dishonoured by proud and selfish and unlovely disciples, do you strive and pray for consistency. And for your own soul's sake, which is dulled by defective views and depressed by each besetting sin, do you seek a serene and lofty faith, do you covet earnestly a blameless conversation. Let your triumphs over self and high-hearted zeal for the Saviour, let the largeness of your spirit and your heavenly elevation, let the exuberance of your goodness and the multitude of its special acts, let the fulness of your affections and the freshness of your feelings, and the abundance of your beneficence, make the

Christian manifest and unmistakeable. Let your happy piety be the far-eyed signal announcing an Oasis in the Desert, and pray that your Church or congregation may become to weary pilgrims another Elim, where when they came they found "twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten Palm-trees."

THE GARDEN INCLOSED.

“ A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse,
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
A paradise of pomegranates are thy productions,
Of delicious fruits, cypress, and spikenard,
Spikenard, and saffron, calamus, and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense,
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices :
A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
Streams from Lebanon.
Awake, O North wind, come, thou South,
Blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out :
That my beloved may come into his garden
And eat its pleasant fruits.”

CHRIST has a garden. There are flowers to be found in the wilderness ; but when in the hedge-row or on the mountain-side you find a plant of rare beauty, it is your instant impulse to fetch it home. You want to have it near at hand, where you can see it every day ; and

so you transplant it. You take it to your garden, and in the shady nook or on the open parterre, you give it a new home,—the place where it is likely to thrive and blossom best.

And so, there have occasionally existed solitary saints. Like Joseph in Egypt, like Lot in Sodom, there have from time to time flourished in unlikely places trees of righteousness:—such as Thomas à Kempis inditing his “Imitation of Christ” in the midst of coarse and lazy friars,—or that monk of Mount Ararat whom Henry Martyn found walking with God amidst the superstition and grossness of an Armenian convent. And just as the florist is filled with rapture when in some unexpected region he alights on a specimen superb in its glory, and for the moment deems it quite matchless,—so, when in the dry places of Church History or in the dreary expanse of secular society, we chance to encounter a fervent believer, in the gladness of surprise and in the contrast with all around we feel as if his beauty were peerless, and as if no culture could compete with the freshness and fulness of his free and Heaven-fostered development.

But it is the will of Christ that his people

should dwell together; and for this purpose he has provided that sacred inclosure, the Christian Church. Fenced round, so as to exclude the boar of the forest and the mischievous spoiler,—its generous soil is kept clear of weeds, and in graceful groups and mutually-sustaining adjustments God plants His people there in families. And if even among thorns the lily was fair,—if even on the open heath the thyme and the myrtle shed exquisite odour,—that lily is lovelier now as it stands amongst gentle companions who do not tarnish or tear it, and the fragrance of these gentle refugees is richer as it comes and goes amidst the blended joy of all the incense-breathing summer.

This garden is fenced. It is a “garden inclosed.” Around it is the wall of fire, the Divine protection; and the more visible wall of human demarcation and ecclesiastical discipline. In every age God has protected and preserved His people; and even in the days of fiercest persecution—when it looked as if the hedge were entirely broken down and the wild beast might devour it at his pleasure,—even then in some Roman catacomb or

Cœlosyrian valley or Waldensian fastness, God hid His remnant and kept up a seed to serve Him. And for the better conservation of true religion, He has appointed a government in His Church. He has intrusted it to those whose business is to tend it and keep it; and whilst they do their best to root out immorality and error, they are also to do their utmost to foster weak faith and restore infirmity,—binding up the bruised reed, restraining the extravagant off-shoot, and restoring to its right place the wayward shoot which quits the supporting espalier.

In this garden there is great variety. There are plants famous for their beauty, and others for their medicinal virtues; some that are prized for their delightful perfume, and others for their “pleasant fruits.” Not only is it an orchard of pomegranates, with its avenues of cypress, but there are spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices. It is man that creates monotony. It is man that fills a garden with a repetition of the self-same vegetation. It is man that clothes entire communities in grey, or drab, or russet, and

who tries to reach perfection by making each the facsimile of his fellow. But, like the great Creator, the new-creating Spirit loves variety; and in the Church of Christ there is room for characters as diverse as the rustic Amos and the imperial Solomon, as Moses so meek and much-enduring, and Paul so self-asserting and so spirited, as John so ethereal and contemplative, and James so homely and so practical. And just as we see in a garden a whole plat devoted to a favourite flower, a border where none but carnations or verbenas bloom, so within the great inclosure of Christ's own Church, are many distinct communities,—“churches,” as we call them, but in reality only so many clumps or denominations within the one great Church; and to the eye which is not entirely wedded to a particular tint or pattern, there is a beauty in the groups which bring richly together distinctive attributes;—in Presbyterian order and Wesleyan fervour, in Congregational liberty and Anglican obedience, in Moravian devotedness and Quaker contentment, in the godliness which makes the Lutheran so happy and endearing in the life that

now is, and which fixes the Calvinist so sublimely on the life that is to come. And as with communities, so with individual members; there is boundless and beautiful variety. There are flowers so fair that whilst you eye them, you kindle up and become for the moment a brighter, sunnier man; and between the leaves of your Bible or memorandum-book you treasure up one blossom of the heath or the heart's-ease to recall that vision of delight. And there are flowers so fragrant that though you care not to take their picture,—like the myrrh or the spikenard they have no peculiar grace nor any brilliancy of bloom,—you love the spot they haunt, and as you pass there comes over your spirit a visitation soft and soothing, which you scarcely notice for the moment, but which makes you bless their memory. And so there are lovely characters,—Christians whom it does you good to look upon; whose beauty of holiness beautifies the beholder, so that in their presence he is actually a more generous or unworldly man; and quotable Christians,—men whose good deeds or edifying words you can chronicle, so that long after they are gone you can still open the

biographic record and recall in unfaded freshness the trait of goodness or the word in season. And there are fragrant characters. You can scarcely define their excellence; you cannot quote their brilliant sayings, and their deeds do not make anecdotes: and yet such a sweet savour of Christ surrounds them, and with such an atmosphere of love and goodness do they fill their daily sphere, that the nooks to which memory loves to fly back and nestle are the bowers which they gladdened, and the homes which they blessed by the perpetual June of their presence. But besides the beautiful and the fragrant,—the characters which shed over the Church's face its loveliness and which fill its precincts with a heavenly charm, there are the fruitful,—“the pomegranates and pleasant fruits,”—the men to whose substantial services, to whose thoughtful kindnesses, and generous deeds, and systematic labours, the world is so much indebted:—Gaius mine host, Tryphena and Tryphosa who labour in the Lord,—the evangelists who go everywhere preaching the word,—the teachers who spend and are spent in our week-day and Sunday schools,—the Dorcas who makes garments for

the poor,—the landed proprietor or the private citizen, who visits from house to house, and who endeavours to elevate in intelligence and moral worth the poor and depressed around him. And although less popular, by no means unimportant, are the bitter herbs, the antidotes and tonics, which also find a place: for there is need for myrrh and aloes as well as roses and lilies. We may not like the sharp reprovee, the stern and uncompromising reformer, so well as the mild and bright-beaming philanthropist; and yet that reprovee may be the truest benefactor; and there would be little scope for the philanthropist, if he had not as his pioneer the energetic reformer. It is sad ignorance of the requirements of human nature to disparage men who fulfilled so great a function as Latimer and Knox, as Cartwright and Melville, as Clarkson and the Haldanes:—men who in their loyalty to Truth forfeited much present popularity, and who kept up the Church's tone by the comforts they renounced and the sacrifices they endured in striving against error and sin.

These plants so various and so pleasant owe their vitality and vigour to the “foun-

tain of gardens :”—and this fountain is called both “a well of living waters” and “streams from Lebanon.” Even in our own isle, with all its clouds and vapours, there is sometimes danger lest the garden be burnt up; and when the leaves hang flaccid on the newly-planted shrub, and when delicate blossoms shrivel up, refusing to open to the scorching beam; as soon as the sun has set, you go to the brook or the fountain and lave the roots with a plentiful libation: and then when the morrow dawns, the leaves spread out so broad and firm, and the reviving blossoms look up and thank you with a smile. But in sultrier lands they do not even trust to this. In the gardens of Damascus you may see so many channels digged, and along them all a little rill meandering, and conveying to the foot of each pomegranate or orange-tree the streams from Lebanon,—the very river which has melted from the snowy peaks, and which, after refreshing the tall cedars, now comes down to these sultry plains and converts its dusty expanse into an earthly paradise. These world-famed orchards do not depend on any tank or pond; but they

drink "living water," and convert into cool shadow and delicious fruits the liquid treasure which the friendly mountain has hoarded since last winter.

The fountain of Christ's garden is the means of grace. A believer droops. In that corner of the garden where he is planted the soil is thin. It is a thirsty land where his lot is cast,—a land where Christian society is rare, or where the preaching of the word is vague and vapid. And the good man feels it. His religion shrivels. The men by whose fervour he was wont to be roused or overawed, he now begins to regard as fanatics; and the good objects in which he was once so hearty,—missions to the heathen and reformatory institutions,—he begins to call Utopian visions and a useless waste of money. But still there is a little root of spiritual vitality, and as there comes into the region an earnest ministry, or as there settles in his neighbourhood a large-hearted and much-loving Christian friend, his feelings begin to freshen. There is a shudder through the depths of his being as when death re-awakens into life; and shocked at his backslidings,—remem-

bering whence he has fallen, he repents and does the first works. And as he begins to distribute tracts and teach a Sunday class, and take an interest in the surrounding cottagers, people would almost fancy that this was the zeal of a young convert ;—they would scarcely suppose that it was the revival of an expiring life,—a return to first love on the part of an Ephesian backslider.

It is dry and dusty weather. The life which the Christian is constrained to lead is much of it too secular. His business takes him chiefly among worldly men, and at times he cannot help being exceedingly engrossed. Trade is precarious, the times are pressing, or he has set on foot a series of experiments, he has struck out a good idea, or commenced a line of traffic with which his mind is busy day and night. And he can hardly disguise it that the true treasure is dwindling, his soul is declining. But just then he is laid prostrate by sickness, or death enters his dwelling ; he falls in with some remarkable book, or hears a rousing sermon ; and as he reads, and listens, and ponders, he is amazed at his own languor, and yielding to the providential

admonition he renews his diligence in practical piety. The things unseen come to his spirit in closer contact, his prayers acquire a new fulness, precision, and sincerity, his watchfulness over himself is resumed, and the brightening up of all his piety betokens a secret source of refreshing.

But better than this dependence on such supplies as are brought from the cistern, is the case of the man who is "planted by the rivers of water," whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who makes it his habitual meditation. In other words, that piety is likely to be the most persistent and most progressive where the appointed means of grace are stately employed. The Word of God, the day of rest, the house of prayer, reading, meditation, worship, secret and social,—these are the chief of the ordinary means. These are the channels along which the streams from Lebanon are conveyed to every tree in the garden:—the truths and thoughts which, born in the calm pure regions overhead, flow along down the valley of Revelation, and which when filled and penetrated by the Spirit of God become "living water." By

far the most satisfactory Christians,—the most abiding and most growthful, are those who are most steadfast in the use of these stated means; who gladly go up to the house of the Lord, who command their household and their children after them to keep His ways, who do not restrain prayer in secret, who are much and mighty in the Scriptures, and who when they meet with those who love the Lord prize the opportunity to speak together and to call upon His name:—not only will their leaf not wither, and not only will what they produce come to perfection, but should it please the Lord to send a season of refreshing they are the likeliest to profit by the plenteous rain.

Such, viewed by the Saviour, is His Church. Such is the combination of beneficence and beauty, of fragrance and fruitfulness, produced by the good Spirit of God, and brought together in the sacred inclosure of the Christian Church. And such is the Saviour's complacency in viewing the varied excellence of this redeemed and regenerate community.

“ My bride ! my love ! in thee perfection meets :
A garden art thou, filled with matchless sweets ;

A garden walled, those matchless sweets to shield ;
A spring inclosed, a fountain fresh and sealed ;
A paradise of plants, where all unite,
Dear to the smell, the palate, or the sight ;
Of rich pomegranates, that at random blow ;
Cypress and nard in fragrant gales that flow ;
Nard, saffron, cinnamon,—the dulcet airs
Deep through its canes the calamus prepares ;
The scented aloes, and each shrub that showers
Gums from its veins, and spices from its flowers.
O pride of gardens ! fount of endless sweets !
Well-spring of all in Lebanon that meets.*

Which brings us to the closing prayer. “Awake, O North wind !” Clouds chill the sky. Over the garden, over the soul of the believer, hangs a gloomy pall of indifference, estrangement, or error. He is not loving God. He sees no beauty in Christ why he should desire Him. There is no sun in the firmament, no light from the Saviour’s countenance, no attraction in the cross, nothing to stir or expand his soul. But “clear weather cometh out of the North country ;” and, like the North wind waking, the Holy Spirit breathes,—and not from the face of the sun but from the face of the garden, from the soul of the disciple, he blows away the inter-

* Mason Goode.

cepting cloud, and lets the Sun of Righteousness shine through; Divine realities are again discerned, the closed petals open, faith revives, and the recognising blossom smiles back to the kindly firmament. There is light, knowledge, truth apprehended, the Gospel anew discovered:—there is “clear weather.” But a cloudless sky is not sufficient. In a hard frost we have seen a crimson rose-bud gazing to the sun, yet it shed no fragrance through the clear but icy atmosphere; and in order to convert the blossom into balm, to cheer April into June, we cry, “Come, thou South wind:” now that the North has chased the clouds of darkness and unbelief, and cleared the sky, “come, thou South,” and with thy kind solvent melt my heart. “Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” Coming warm from the land of love,—coming from the regions of unreserved benevolence and enraptured adoration,—coming from that realm of happiness and praise which enjoys the perennial sunshine of Christ’s presence, the Holy Spirit brings with Him the true summer of the soul. Faith He sublimates to full assurance, and conviction He quickens into cheerful activity, and principle

elaborated into holy feeling and fervid emotion He causes to flow forth, as spices do,—a beatific atmosphere around the heavenly man. And from a church full of such members the fragrance overflows and surprises the passer-by. For though the garden is inclosed, the breeze is not confined: and, blowing where he listeth, the South wind sometimes wafts the spicy odour far forth into the outside world. Yes, the world is the better,—the happier for that Church which God has “inclosed” in its midst. Faith in God, the hope full of immortality, some connexion between this world and heaven, the beauty of holiness, the charms of disinterested benevolence,—were it not for that standing Church the world would hardly know such things: but going like

“An incense through the midnight land,”

even though the garden itself is veiled, and they are sleepers whom the exquisite odour visits, it infuses pleasant thoughts into their dreams; and waking, some have not been able to forget the exquisite sensation, and, searching for its source, their own steps have been guided into the Garden Inclosed.

HARVEST HOME.

THE earth is full of God's goodness, and so is every season. Spring, with its opening blossoms, its exquisite odours, its suggestions of "good things not seen as yet;" and Summer, with "healing in its wings," with its balmy breezes, with its plenitude of life, and its placid consciousness of power,—each is a witness for Him whose name is Love. But the "fruitful season" is a witness still plainer, and one which speaks to the intelligence of all mankind. And, indeed, each contributes a several item in the testimony to the great Creator. For, if Spring says, "How great is His beauty!" and Summer, "How great His benevolence!" pointing to the rustling sheaf and the laden bough, says Autumn, "And how great is His bounty!"

Every season is a preacher, but of them

all we are inclined to think Autumn the most popular and impressive. It needs no acquaintance with Nature's mysteries to understand his sermon; it needs no peculiar susceptibility to be carried along by his direct and homely eloquence. In the field which he is reaping the unlettered rustic sees the answer to the fourth petition of his daily prayer, and the Christian philosopher sees his heavenly Father giving bread to himself and his children, as plainly as if it were sent by the hand of an angel, or rained through a window in heaven. And whilst the purport of the discourse is so obvious, it is spoken to great advantage. Around there is little to distract, whilst there is much to fix the thoughts, to open the ear and soothe the spirit. Autumn is the sabbath of the months; and with its mellow light and listening silence, the whole land seems consecrated into a temple hushed and holy. Nor is there lack of ministers. The laden trees are priests, the corn-fields are choristers; and, yielding to the tranquil influence, if you yourself be devoutly silent, their psalm will come into your soul:—

“ So Thou the year most lib’rally
Dost with Thy goodness crown,
And all Thy paths abundantly
On us drop fatness down.

They drop upon the pastures wide,
That do in deserts lie;
The little hills on every side
Rejoice right pleasantly.

With flocks the pastures clothed be,
The vales with corn are clad;
And now they shout and sing to Thee,
For Thou hast made them glad.”

To a mind that sees God in everything there is a special “joy in harvest.” It is a new pledge of Jehovah’s faithfulness:—another accomplishment of that ancient promise, “While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease:”—a promise made all the more striking by the incidents which imperilled its fulfilment;—the winter that looked as if it would never go away, perhaps the drought which threatened to scorch the seed in the baked and burning furrow; perhaps the cold skies which forbade the ear to fill, or the drenching floods, which, when filled, dashed it to the earth again;—

but past all these perils, or through them all, a mighty Providence has borne the sustenance of a world, and, as it spans the clouds of the dissolving equinox, the rainbow asks on behalf of the great Covenant-maker, "Hath one word failed of all that God hath spoken?" And so it proclaims the loving-kindness of the Lord, the care and munificence of the great Provider. It is not a mere subsistence He secures to the children of men, but it is a feast of fat things; not only the bread which strengthens man's heart, but the wine that makes him glad, and the oil that makes his face to shine,—all the variety of fruits, and grains, and herbs, and spices; nor bread for the children only, but crumbs for the creatures under the table. Nor at this season can we fail to mark the minuteness of forethought and munificence of kindness with which our heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the firmament; the profusion which not only fills the barn of the husbandman, but which, in every forest and every hedge-row, has a store-house for those pensioners of His who can take no thought for the morrow. With its banquet-hall so wide and so populous,

with its heaps of abundance, and its air of open-handed welcome, Harvest is the season which tells us of God's hospitality.

Besides the palpable Providence,—the visible nearness of a God most gracious and merciful,—a material element in the joy of harvest is the reward of industry.

If the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, so is that labourer's bread. The fields are bare: the year's work is done: and as he nestles among the sheaves, so glossy, dry, and fragrant; as he surveys the golden heap, fresh-sifted on the threshing-floor; as he watches the snowy powder flowing from between the revolving cylinders: as he sits down with his rosy children to the household loaf, that bread has to him a flavour which no science can impart,—those sheaves have a grace and a beauty which no pencil can reproduce, for no artist can espy. That bread has the pleasant flavour of personal industry: that garner concentrates in itself a year of his own toil-worn history. And now in the snug comfort of his cottage, and amidst rainy gusts prophetic of winter, it calls up to complacent memory the frosty

morning when by lantern-light he yoked his team,—the grey and windy noon when he sowed the seed,—the day when to save the tender crop and the crumbling furrows, he battled with the swollen brook and banked out the thunder-torrent;—the weary nights when he waked so often, and from the dripping eaves and gurgling corbels presaged rotten shocks or flattened fields: and now that all these anxieties and toils are ended, and now that the Most High has given these results to his labour, he that went forth weeping bearing precious seed, comes again rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.

And the analogy goes up, and upward still, from that rejoicing peasant to the Christian parent who reaps his prayer and efforts in the salvation of his child:—up to the Christian patriot who, after all the ebbs and flows of popular favour, is rewarded with the extinction of an evil, or the reformation of a realm:—up to the missionary who after a ten-years' sowing, sees coming in the first-fruits of Greenland or Tahiti unto Christ:—up to the martyr who from beneath the Heavenly Altar looks down,—Cranmer on his England, Huss

and Jerome on their Prague, Wishart on his Scotland, and from his ashes sees a mighty Church upsprung and flourishing:—upward and upward yet to that King of Martyrs and Prince of Missionaries who from His thirty years of husbandry among the hills of Galilee, when His head was filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night,—who, from the handful of corn which He then planted in the earth, and at last watered with His blood, already sees fruit that shakes like Lebanon, and who, when at length the harvest of the earth is ripe and Heaven's garner has received the last of His redeemed, shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

But there are solemn words in Autumn's sermon. He says, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

We see the earnest even now. He that sows to the flesh,—he who spends his property or his talents in self-indulgence, in idolatrous vanities, in that cruel luxury which

is deaf to the cry of misery, in gratifying the coarser appetites and passions of this fallen nature,—of the flesh he reaps corruption. His harvest is a heart constantly contracting. His harvest is often a shortened life or a shattered intellect:—a body prematurely blighted and a mind that loses susceptibilities and powers which once lost can never come again. His harvest is more and more of that corruption which he sows,—sin added to sin,—the habit of evil strengthened,—a growing remoteness from virtue and happiness, because a growing proneness to evil and a growing powerlessness against temptation.

And he that soweth to the Spirit, even before he reaps “life everlasting,”—see how rich is his intermediate recompense! From that dependent spirit of his and from those devotional habits, see how large is his harvest of peace and serenity! Amidst tumult and agitation see how fixed is his heart, trusting in the Lord: and amidst the flaming shower of each day’s temptations, burning into the souls of many, and leaving dark scars on the conscience, see how on his panoply of faith the sparks die out unperceived and harmless!

From that God-fearing spirit of his, see how large is the harvest of social respect and personal security! what a fund of confidence and honour has accumulated from those early acts of self-denial, or from one deed of courageous honesty! what a fortune has been founded on a single commandment tenaciously remembered and constantly observed! And from that benevolent spirit of his, see how large is his harvest of love and gratitude! What a music is in his name, what a continual comfort in his presence! See how all hearts open towards his, as instinctively as they close on the approach of others; and see how he inherits the earth,—a meek but universal monarch carrying captive the whole community, and reigning by love in souls which swords and sceptres fail to reach, and which even genius cannot conquer!

But this is only a faint foreshadowing of that final and exhaustless harvest which is to follow this earthly seed-time: for although salvation is all of grace, yet, compatibly with its entire gratuitousness, we know that in this life He who gives grace for grace is pleased to acknowledge the services of His believing

people, for the sake of that Saviour in whose strength they are wrought, and to whose joy their recompense adds ; and if in this life, why not also in the life to come? And in somewhat the same sense as reaping is the reward of sowing, we are taught that gracious habits, formed and cherished on earth, shall find their consummation in the still higher and holier products of eternity—whilst the self-denial implied in their culture will be infinitely over-balanced and requited in the joys of the life everlasting.

Think of this, you that are well-nigh weary of well-doing:—you that stand alone in a godless household, and who sometimes grow disheartened amidst the coldness, and the opposition, and the jeering:—you who have enlisted under Christ's banner, but who, if you have not actually forsaken house and lands for His sake, have at least felt constrained to let pass many a golden opportunity:—you who have been for years watching for a soul, if haply you might win it, and who still see it as far from the kingdom as ever:—you who have long been contending with a wicked temper or an unholy passion, and

who dare not say that you have gained any sensible advantage over it—oh, be not weary! Think of the joy of harvest. Think of the day when you shall rest from your labours, and these works shall follow you. Think of the day,—the humbling, affecting, overwhelming day, when the cup of cold water will reappear as an ingredient in the everlasting glory. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not.

Yet be not deceived. God is not mocked. He that soweth to the flesh shall have his harvest also. Darnel grows as well as wheat, and thistles as well as barley. The awards of eternity are not the inflictions of arbitrary power, but they are the legitimate products, the prolongations, and out-workings of the present: a harvest corresponding to the seed-time: so righteous, so congruous under the government of a just God, so inevitable that the sinner feels, if he does not confess, that the sentence is just. Reader, be not deceived. Let not that day, that harvest-day of sorrow, come on you as a thief—that day when he who showed judgment without mercy shall

receive judgment without mercy—that day when he who wrought abomination and made a lie shall find himself excluded from those pearly gates through which nothing enters that defileth—that day when he who used to say to God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways,” shall hear God say to him, “Depart from me ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you.”* Be not deceived. God is not mocked. This must be the way of it. Sin will result in sorrow: carnality will reap corruption. So entreat of God for the Redeemer’s sake to cancel that guilty past—to exterminate the crop of guilt and crime, so that it shall not seed itself in further evil, nor be treasured up as wrath against the day of wrath. Break off your sins by repentance, and from their fearful consequences take refuge in a Saviour’s intercession. And beg earnestly for God’s good Spirit that you, too, taught, led, and quickened by the Spirit, may of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

* Works of Andrew Fuller, vol. vii. p. 140.

THE AMARANTH: OR,
IMMORTALITY.

WHEN summer was in its noon, what a life was on the lawn,—what a stir was in the trees! But already that stir is hushed,—that life is dead. Along with the bees and the butterflies, the leaves have been shaken from the boughs and are entangled among the matted grass or trodden in the mire. And as soon as these withered waifs began to flutter through the darkening air, the birds of passage took their flight, and on the wings of the equinox joy sped away to balmier clines.

How wide the desolation! how like our human history! On the trunk of the last century there swarmed a life so fresh and verdant that it felt as if it could not fade.

but the death-wind has blown and torn from their places the master-spirits of that time. And in the promenades, and ball-rooms, and public gardens of that day, what a blaze of beauty,—what a burst of full-blown fashion! Where is it now? Beneath the churchyard sod; like heaps of withered leaves, drifted into the family vault or obscurely mingled with promiscuous clay; and here and there a tattered survivor, like a funeral pennon, clinging to the desolated bough.

The hay-field, the flower-garden, the forest,—each is an emblem of our death-doomed generations. But more pensive still than this simultaneous decay is the fading of the individual flower. You cherished it in your chamber window. Perhaps an invalid yourself, you were glad at the first promise of a blossom. That bud expanded, and along with it your own heart seemed to open. Its exotic odour brought you hints of warmer, brighter regions, and its petals so soft and pure, sent up your thoughts to the home of the angels. But no morrow saw its loveliness repeated. Next day it already drooped, and a few days more the glory was departed,—the withered

shrub was carried out to the dead flowers' mausoleum.

The friend with whom you take sweet counsel,—the brightest and dearest presence in your home,—you yourself are such a fading flower. And there are times when the thought comes over you quite agonisingly, “All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the grass.” This terrible mortality! They drop on every side. It seems as if almost every morning you woke up to a world which contains a friend or two the fewer; and every morning's post, every daily paper, is apt to tell some goodness that has passed away, some joy whose extinction has left the surrounding region dark and desolate. And the mourner is no less mortal. “We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away.” Detached from the Tree of Life, behold our entire generation drifting to and fro. Ensconced behind the rock or lurking in the cranny, a few may escape a little while; and some may touch the verge and be snatched back again by the returning eddy. But the besom of Destruction plies its sleepless vans, and soon or late

the last reluctant flutterer is blown across the brink and disappears in the great eternity. It is appointed unto man to die ; and the reprieve is very short. For with these mighty aspirations, and with all the possibilities of achievement and enjoyment, what are three-score years and ten ? To such capacities as ours,—with a universe so vast and with our own adaptations so endless,—what a mere glimpse of existence is the best estate of man ! As the Northumbrian noble said to King Edwin, “ When the king and his guests are feasting round the fire on the stormy night, feeling nothing of the cold and forgetful of the wild winter weather, there darts through the hall a poor sparrow, in at one door and out at the other ; the moment which the bird spends in warmth and shelter is as nothing to the long time of the tempest. And so is the brief moment of our present life to that long tract which has gone before, and which is still to come.” * And were this the whole of it,—what a tantalising taste of the banquet of being, — what a flash through the cheerful realms of existence, and then to be

* Neander, vol. v. p. 24.

driven out into the blackness of darkness for ever!

Profiting by the season and its solemnising influences, let us raise our thoughts from the decay and the dying which Nature exhibits to the life and immortality which the Gospel reveals. Or as we have both combined in that passage where St. Peter says, "Believers are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you,"—a passage in which the perpetuity of God's truth is contrasted with the transitory state of man on earth, and in which the believer of God's truth is represented as a partaker of God's immortality.

When God created man, He did as when He created angels; He formed a creature inspired with His own immortality, and designed to live for ever. But that creature sinned and died. God's beloved Son assumed into

union with His Godhead the soul of man and man's body also. That soul kept sinless to the last, and that body spiritualised by its transit through the tomb, He has carried on high, and enthroned in His own Heaven; and in Himself as the first-fruits, He shows what a redeemed Humanity is capable of becoming and enjoying. In that incarnation of His, however,—in that work of life-earning obedience and death-averting expiation,—as well as in that glorious ascension,—the Saviour was not solitary. He was not acting on His own behoof. He was a Second Adam, representing a numerous family and procuring for them afresh the gift of a forfeited immortality. Nor can words express how complete and copious is that life of which Immanuel is the great Recoverer, and which commences in the soul when quickened anew by the Holy Spirit the Comforter. But it is an abundant life:—a life in its amplitude of range and largeness of enjoyment, the image of its Author's own:—a protected life,—a life really “insured,”—a life that can never more be forfeited,—a life identified with the Saviour's own, and hid with Himself in God:—an endless life; a life

which Gabriel himself will not outlive, and which derived directly from the great "Fountain of Life," is lasting as God's eternity.

"All flesh is grass," but believers in Jesus are no longer mere "flesh." They are partakers of a Divine nature. They are the children of an immortal Father,—the children of that God who liveth and abideth for ever. "To as many as received the Saviour, even to those who believed on His name, He gave the power to become the sons of God." And as long as their Heavenly Father lives, they cannot die.

"The word of the Lord endureth for ever." Our words come and go. We ourselves are always changing, and what was a genuine effusion of our hearts at one period of our history, may be no true index of our feelings afterwards. And circumstances vary. We find that we have been deceived in our estimate of character, and people turn out so different from what we took them once to be. The consequence is, that many of our past sayings are now a dead letter; and when reminded of an old promise, we are apt to feel that, were it to be repeated, we should

not make that promise now. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; and when He proclaimed the fullest and freest Gospel to our world, He did not feel more propitious towards sinners of our race than He is feeling now. To His all-seeing eye the end was known from the beginning; and as no crime has evolved so tremendous as to modify the saying, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," so no transgressor has arisen so gigantic as to limit the Divine forgiveness, or to form an exception in the Divine and world-embracing "Whosoever." Among all the utterances of the Most High, and all the declarations of that Faithful Witness, His incarnate Son, there is not one which has faded into inanity or grown a dead letter; but, like the wise, holy, and unchanging Speaker, each is a faithful saying,—a lively oracle,—vital with Divine significance,—like God Himself, a word that liveth and endureth for ever.

Reader, admit into your mind that Gospel, and it will fill you with its own immortality. From the dark grave of ungodliness it will raise you into the sunshine of God's recon-

ciled countenance, and breaking down the putrid vault of corruption and earthly-mindedness, it will usher you into the resurrection-life of the new creation,—the pure pleasures and holy joys of God's own children,—nay, into something of that beatific life with which God's beloved Son is made glad for evermore. And with the living God for your Father, and the living Saviour for your Friend, and with the land of the living for your adopted country and expected home, you will verify those words of Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

And just as the bleak weather sends us into our homes, and makes us thankful for the warmth and shelter we lately slighted, so separations, sorrow, felt infirmity, will send us back into these faithful sayings, and will make us gladly retreat into the truth of the Gospel;—a Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light, and which over against Nature's death and desolation reveals an endless life, a deathless Saviour, an eternal God.

An endless life! In its ordinary on-going the hidden life may be too languid for the

believer's consciousness, and it may sometimes seem ready to die. But where the faithful saying is believed a new life exists, and the more implicitly and joyfully that Gospel is embraced the more abundantly does that new life mount up in the assured and exulting spirit, and manifest itself in the holy and benignant deportment. And to not a few of God's people has it been granted so to realise the blessedness beyond, that it almost seemed as if excess of life shook down the tabernacle, and as if the fittest sequel of the history, and the truest epitaph were to record that from that day, "*Desiit mortalitatis esse.*"*

A deathless Saviour! Jesus "once dead dieth no more;" and it is not only to make intercession for us that He ever liveth, but to manage and administer all those matters which might cause our hearts to be troubled. You are going a long journey, and you deposit with some trusty friend your most valued effects, and if only he lives, you know that on your return you will get a good account of them. Or the night is pitchy dark, and

* The inscription on Dr. Jortin's grave at Kensington.

you are stepping from the slippery bulwarks of the ship on to the steep acclivity of the unknown shore ; and although between ship and shore there is an interval and a black abyss beneath, the extended hand which grasps your own is so powerful, and is accompanied by a voice so cordial and true, that without any tremor you spring forward and exchange your heaving barque for solid land. You are going the way of all the earth, and as there is no one else to whom you dare intrust it, in the words of the only Christian whose dying words Scripture has preserved, you cry, "Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and as the anchor drops, and as from earthly life you step forth into the unknown Hereafter, you exclaim, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," for you know whom you are believing ; the everlasting arms are around you, and He who says, "Lo, I am with you," is able to keep you.

“ ‘ My friend, sincerely yours *till death,*
The world no farther goes ;
Perhaps, while ‘ earth to earth ’ is laid,
A tear of pity flows.

Be thou, my Saviour, then my friend,
In thee my soul shall trust ;
Who false wilt never prove in death,
Nor leave me in the dust.

“ Home while my other friends return,
All solemn, silent, sad ;
With thee my flesh shall rest in hope,
And all my bones be glad.”*

An eternal God ! Yes ; from the frailty and fugacity of the creature it is delightful to retreat into the permanence and constancy of the unchanging Jehovah ; and how re-assuring and joyful to remember, that though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, there is a kindness that will not depart, and a covenant that cannot be broken. After all, mutation and decay are the exception, not the rule—an incident in the history of the universe, which shall come to an end when, with one foot on the earth and another on the sea, a mighty angel swears, “ There shall be no more Time.” It may be a mere moment in the howling winter-night that the little bird spends in the blazing banquet-hall ; but before that winter began to bluster there was a sum-

* Bishop Horne.

mer in the world, and there will be again a summer when winter storms have ceased to rave. In such a summer our earth commenced its course, and through the weary cycle,—though not long to Him with whom a thousand years are as one day,—it is revolving back into the sunshine of its Creator's blessing. Already the mid-winter of its grossest darkness, and its greatest crime, the murder of the Lord of glory,—that blackest, guiltiest hour is past; and streaks of dawn on the hills of darkness, and a few flowers appearing, promise day-break and a spring; and before the cycle is complete and the mystery is finished, with fairer scenes than Eden and one spot at least dearer to God than Eden ever knew, the redeemed and regenerate earth will find itself once more in the sunshine of its Creator's countenance—a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In that sleepless Wisdom and unchanging Goodness be it ours to acquiesce and rejoice; and if we quit this scene with any prayers unanswered, or any labours uncompleted, let it content us to know that the scene is still pervaded by a Presence which controls all events

for the best, and which will perfect all that ought to be permanent. If events are not moving to our mind,—if they do not march to that short jingle which we call harmony,—let us remember that in God's great anthem there are breaks and pauses, notes high and low, and passages very mournful, as well as others full of terrible majesty before we come to the triumphant outburst of the conclusive chorus. Meanwhile, from all intermediate frailty or decay, be it ours to retreat into His society who has been "the dwelling-place of His people in all generations;" and appropriating the words of Moses, the man of God, let us pray in the spirit of his most ancient psalm,

" O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

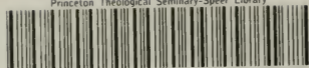
" Under the shadow of thy wings,
Still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure."







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